THE BOBBSEY TWINS BOOKS

By Laura Lee Hope

THE BOBBSEY TWINS
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THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT CLOVER BANK



It was such fun, sliding down the hay from the loft

The Bobbsey Twins at Clover Bank



By

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CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERIOUS BOX

TAP! Tap! Tap!

Someone was knocking on the door of the kitchen where Dinah Johnson, the fat, jolly, coloured cook of the Bobbsey family was just taking a pie from the oven. Holding the pie carefully, Dinah turned her head towards the door.

Tap! Tap! Tap! sounded again.

"Good lan' ob massy! Wonder who dat am?" murmured Dinah. "Maybe it am one ob dem woodpecker birds whut fly 'round de garden lookin' fo' bugs in de trees. But if Mistah Woodpecker t'inks he's gwine t' look at dis pie, he's mighty much mistook—dat's all I got to say!"

Dinah waddled over to the table, carrying the pie carefully, and then, as the knocking again sounded on the kitchen door, she walked towards it and opened it.

"Git away from heah, Mistah Woodpecker!" she exclaimed, before she really saw who it was. Then she started back in surprise, for Bert Bobbsey, carrying in his hands something wrapped in paper, slid quickly through the half-opened door and exclaimed:

"Don't tell Nan or Flossie or Freddie that I came in this way, Dinah! I want to get upstairs—quick!"

"Mah goodness! Bress yo' heart, honey! Has anyt'ing done happened dat yo' got to slip in in dis mysteriousness way an' hide upstairs? Whut's de mattah?" demanded the coloured cook.

"Hush, please, Dinah! It's all right. I just don't want any of the others to know I came in this way!" explained Bert, with a smile, which told the cook that there was nothing very much wrong. "I'm going upstairs to hide this," Bert went on. "If Flossie comes in don't tell her you saw me."

"Oh—all right," remarked Dinah with a chuckle. "Ah done guess it's some game dem Bobbsey twins is playin'," she went on to herself. "Bress der hearts! Nices' chilluns dat eber was! Dat's it! Some game Bert is playin' like hide de organ or find de moty-car, Ah reckon! Ho! Ho!"

She laughed softly to herself as she waddled back to the oven to take out another pie, while Bert crept up the back stairs on tiptoe, still carrying the paper package of which he took great care.

"Dat's what it must be—some game!" murmured Dinah, and then, as she set the second pie on the table, again came the sound of knocking at the door.

"Go on away, Freddie!" went on Dinah. "Ah can't bodder wif yo' any more. Once is enough to come in mah kitchen when Ah's busy wif pies! Run along, Freddie!"

"Hush, Dinah, please!" came a voice from the outer side of the door. "This isn't Freddie. I'm Nan! Please open the door and let me in. I can't turn the knob—my hands are full!"

"Well, mah good lan' ob massy!" exclaimed the coloured cook, as she gave a hasty look at the oven

to make sure the third pie, still in the stove, would not burn. "Fust comes Bert, an' his hands is full; den comes Nan, an' her hands is full. Whut's gwine on in dish yeah house today Ah wonders?"

But remembering that Bert had begged her not to mention how he had entered, Dinah said nothing to Nan of this when she opened the door and saw Bert's twin sister standing there, holding in her arms a brown paper parcel, larger than the one Bert had carried up the back stairs.

"Thank you, Dinah, for letting me in," whispered Nan, with a smile. "This bundle is so big I couldn't reach the knob. Please don't tell Flossie or Freddie or Bert that I came in this way, will you?"

"No'm—Ah won't say one word!" promised Dinah as she watched Nan tiptoe quietly up the back stairs.

Chuckling to herself, Dinah went back to the oven to get out the third pie, meanwhile having shut the outer kitchen door, for she did not want any draught of air blowing on her fresh pastry.

So she had closed the door and had set the third pie on the table when she was so startled that she gave a jump for, looking at one of the kitchen windows, she saw Freddie Bobbsey trying in vain to raise it. The window was partly open, but not wide enough for the little fellow to slip in.

"Dinah! Dinah! Open the window and let me in!" he begged. "And please hurry! It's very 'portant!"

"Um! It important, am it?" asked Dinah. "Den why doesn't yo' come in de do' laik de others done?" She meant Bert and Nan, but no sooner had she

spoken than she remembered that the two older Bobbsey twins had each begged her to keep quiet about them. Luckily, however, Freddie did not pay much attention to the last part of Dinah's remarks.

"I don't want to come in the door 'cause Flossie will see me!" he explained, trying to wriggle under the partly raised sash. "She's out in the garden, watching, and I don't want her to see me. So open the window and let me in, please, Dinah!"

"Aw right, honey lamb, I will," promised the cook. "Dis suah mus' be some funny game de Bobbsey twins am playin'," she thought to herself. "An' Freddie's got a bundle, too! Dis suah am queer!"

Indeed, Freddie had a bundle. It was wrapped in a white cloth and was almost as large as himself, though it was not very heavy, for he lifted it easily into the window ahead of him, when Dinah had raised the sash higher.

"There! I guess Flossie didn't see me," murmured the little boy.

Instead of going up the back stairs as his older brother and sister had done, Freddie made for the cellarway which opened out of the kitchen.

"Where you going?" demanded Dinah, as she saw what the small lad was about to do.

"Hush!" he begged, holding a finger over his lips. "This is a secret! I want to hide it down the cellar. He'll never think of looking for it down there!"

"What is it?" asked the coloured woman. "Who won't look down there for it? What is it, Freddie?"

But Freddie did not answer. He was going softly down the cellar stairs, carrying the package in cloth, almost as big as himself.

"If dis wasn't summer Ah suah would t'ink it was Christmus, wif everybody hidin' presents," Dinah murmured. "But Christmus don't come in June! It mus' be some game!"

She was just reaching for the tin can of powdered sugar which she intended sprinkling on the pies when a noise behind her caused her to turn quickly. She saw, tiptoeing out of the pantry, Flossie Bobbsey, Freddie's blue-eyed twin sister. Flossie, also, carried a good-sized package.

"Hallo, Dinah!" murmured Flossie. "Those pies smell good!" and she hungrily sniffed the air. "But don't tell anybody you saw me!" she went on, with a smile, and she crossed the kitchen in the direction of a door that led to the back hall.

"Where'd you come from?" demanded Dinah. "I was in dat pantry a little bit ago an' you wasn't in it, Flossie!"

"I know!" giggled the little girl. "I got up on a box and crawled in the window. It was open. I didn't want Freddie to see me. He was out in the garden and I slipped away from him. I'm going to hide this in the little cupboard under the stairs," she went on, holding up the box she carried.

"What is it?" asked Dinah.

"It's a secret!" answered Flossie, with a smile. "Bert and Nan aren't around, are they?"

"No, they aren't 'round now," replied the cook.

"I'm glad of that," said Flossie, with a sigh of relief as she tossed her tangle of golden curls back out of her eyes. "I don't want any of them to know until we are at the table this evening."

"What's it all about?" asked Dinah, more from

habit by this time than because she expected to be told. "Is it a game, honey lamb?"

"Sort of!" laughed Flossie. "But it's more of a secret!"

"Um! Yeah! I could guess dat part ob it!" chuckled Dinah. "It's suah am a secret!"

She watched Flossie slip quietly out into the back hall and heard the little girl opening the small cupboard under the stairs, where all sorts of odds and ends were kept.

With a silent laugh, which shook her big, fat body as a bowl of jelly is shaken when it is placed on the table, the coloured cook went on with her kitchen work. Soon she heard the voice of Bert as he went down the front stairs and out of the front door.

"Ah guess Nan didn't ketch him," murmured Dinah.

A little later, down the back stairway, floated the voice of Nan, speaking to her mother in the latter's room.

"An' Ah reckon Bert didn't see Nan," went on Dinah. "So far it's all right. Dat is ef dey don't ketch Flossie in de back hall."

But this did not happen, because Flossie remained in the little cupboard under the stairs for some time. She appeared to be taking great pains to hide the package she was carrying.

However, a little later Flossie came softly back into the kitchen through the door leading to the back hall.

"There! Nobody knows where it is but me!" she declared.

"Dat's good," murmured Dinah.

"And maybe I could have a piece of pie," went on the little girl. "I think you bake the loveliest pies, Dinah! Honest I do!"

"Yes'm, honey lamb, dey is good!" admitted the cook, with pardonable pride in her work. "But Ah cain't cut a fresh pie fo' you!"

"Oh dear!" sighed Flossie.

There was a noise on the cellar stairs and Dinah wondered if Freddie were coming up.

But nothing like this happened. The cellar door did not open, and Flossie did not appear to have heard the noise.

"Isn't there anything you can give me to eat, Dinah?" she asked wistfully. "I'm so hungry!"

"Bress yo' heart, honey lamb! Ah kin gib yo' some treacle cookies!" replied Dinah.

"Oh, treacle cookies! I just love them!" cried Flossie, and when she had several in her hands she ran out, crying: "Freddie! Freddie! Where are you? I got cookies!"

Freddie did not answer, and the voice of Flossie died away as she ran in search of him.

But pretty soon the kitchen cellar door opened and Freddie's head was thrust out. Dinah heard the noise of the knob and turned to look at the little fellow.

"Is she gone?" whispered Freddie. "Is Flossie gone?"

"She suah has," was the reply.

"I'm glad she didn't see me," he went on. "I got it hid down behind the coal bin."

"Good lan'!" exclaimed Dinah. "Whut's it all about, anyhow?"

"Hush!" begged Freddie in a whisper. "I got Daddy a present for his birthday—it's tomorrow, you know. I found a basket and I picked it full of flowers. And in the bottom of the basket is a new baseball. I saved up my money and bought it for him. He'll think there's only flowers in the basket, but down under them's the baseball. An' if Daddy doesn't want it to play with himself he can give it to me; can't he, Dinah?"

"Ah reckon he can, honey!" chuckled the coloured cook.

"Don't you think that's a 'riginal present for Daddy, Dinah?" asked the little fellow. "I wanted to give him something 'riginal!"

"It suah am 'riginal, all right," admitted Dinah. "An' here's some cookies fo' yo'. Better run out now an' play!"

"I will," agreed Freddie. "But don't tell anybody about my 'riginal present for Daddy, will you?"

"No, Ah won't," Dinah promised.

It was a little while after this that Flossie came running back, begging for more cookies.

"Have yo' done eat all dem up I gib yo'?" asked Dinah.

"I gave some to Mary Blake and some to Sallie Porter," explained Flossie, naming two of her playmates. "So I didn't have many myself."

"Dat's too bad!" murmured Dinah. "But dere's plenty mo' cookies! He'p yo'se'f, honey," and she brought out the pan.

Flossie looked around the kitchen to make sure none but Dinah could hear her, and then she whispered:

"Dinah, do you know what was in that box I hid in the stair cupboard? Do you?"

The cook could pretty well guess by this time, but she pretended she did not know and shook her head.

"It's a present for Daddy's birthday," went on Flossie. "I'm going to give it to him when we have dinner. Do you know what it is?"

Again Dinah shook her head.

"Well, I'll tell you, but you mustn't tell anybody!" whispered Flossie. "It's a little folding push-cart for a doll. I think Daddy will like that, don't you? It's the cutest little push-cart and it all folds up small and goes in a box. But you can unfold it big enough to ride my largest doll. Isn't that a nice present for Daddy?"

"It suah am!" laughed Dinah.

Though Bert and Nan said nothing to her about the packages they had so secretly hidden, Dinah guessed that the older twins had also bought presents for their father's birthday, which occurred on the morrow but which would be celebrated that evening, as usual.

"Ah wonders if Bert an' Nan got t'ings laik Freddie an' Flossie?" chuckled Dinah. "Dose small twins suah am lookin' out for derse'ves!"

It was later in the afternoon, and the Bobbsey twins were gathering about the house to get washed and dressed for dinner, when the doorbell rang.

"I'll go!" cried Nan, making a dash for the hall

Bert was also ready to answer the ring, but his twin sister was a little bit ahead of him. And Flossie and Freddie were not far behind Bert, who ran out into

the hall in time to see Nan talking to the driver of a post-office van.

"Does Mr. Richard Bobbsey live here?" asked the delivery man.

"Yes, sir," answered Nan.

"But he isn't home from the office yet," added Bert.

"Well, I guess that won't matter," went on the man, with a laugh. "I have a box here for him. The charges are paid so I will leave it, if one of you will sign the receipt for it."

"I'll sign," offered Nan, as she had often heard her mother say.

The box was set down in the front hall. It was of wood, and seemed quite heavy.

"What's in it?" asked Bert.

"I don't know," the delivery man answered. "Maybe it has a fortune in gold in it. Anyhow, there's something that rattles. And a letter came to the office, asking us to deliver the box just before dinner this evening. Maybe it has something good to eat in it."

He drove away with a laugh, while the Bobbsey twins gathered about the mysterious box in the hall—a box that had come to their father on the eve of his birthday.

What was in it?

That is what each of the Bobbsey twins wondered.

CHAPTER II

QUEER NOISES

"WHAT is going on down there, my dears?" called Mrs. Bobbsey from the top of the stairs. Down in the hall below she could see, gathered about the mysterious box, the four twins. She had heard the bell ring, and at first thought it was her husband, coming home early on account of the birthday celebration.

But when she heard the strange tones of the delivery man she realized that something else had happened, and she was curious to know what it was about.

"It's a big box for Daddy," explained Bert.

"We don't know where it's from," went on Nan.

"And the 'livery man didn't know what was in it," added Flossie.

"But I guess it's for Daddy's birthday," exclaimed Freddie. "And I got——"

He stopped just in time. He had been about to speak of the " 'riginal" present he himself had hidden down in the cellar.

"Well, if it's for Daddy we must let it alone until he comes home," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Come, now, and get ready for dinner. It will not be long before Daddy arrives, and he will open the box."

"I wonder what's in it," murmured Bert as he

moved away, with a backward look at the mysterious package.

"And I wonder where it's from," said Nan, who was as curious as her brother.

But they would not think of trying to open it, or of trying to pry off one corner to look inside. Indeed, this would have been hard to do, since the box was strongly made.

Flossie and Freddie were as eager as their older brother and sister to know about the box. But perhaps they were thinking so much of their own presents that they did not say much about the package the delivery man had brought.

While the four are getting ready for the evening meal I will beg just a few moments of the time of my new readers to introduce them to the Bobbsey twins. There were four of the twins, as you have learned by this time. Bert and Nan, who had dark hair and eyes, were the older pair, and Flossie and Freddie, whose eyes were blue and whose hair was golden, came next. Their father was Richard Bobbsey, who owned a large lumberyard in the eastern city of Lakeport on Lake Metoka.

The Bobbsey Twins is the name of the first book which tells about these children and what happened to them and their friends. After that Bert and his brother and sisters had many adventures in the country, at the seaside, and at school.

Happenings at Blueberry Island, at Snow Lodge, at Whitesail Harbour, kept the twins busy for several holidays, and they had many strange adventures.

However, time moves on, and now it was the

beginning of summer, and the eve of Mr. Bobbsey's birthday.

The mysterious box—at least the twins thought it was mysterious—had arrived, and they were all excited, waiting for their father to come home to open it.

"Isn't Daddy late tonight?" asked Nan, when she had finished dressing and had gone into her mother's room.

"No, not later than usual," answered Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile, as she glanced at the clock on the bureau.

"Then time is going awfully slow!" commented Bert, looking in from the hall. "I wish Daddy would hurry! I want to see him open his birthday box."

"Don't be too sure that is a box for Daddy's birthday," remarked Mrs. Bobbsey. "It may be something about business."

"If it was business they would send it to him at his office," came from Nan.

"Besides," added Bert, "the delivery man said they got a letter asking 'em to deliver the box before dinner this evening, and everybody knows we always give Daddy his presents at dinner on the night before his birthday."

"So we do," agreed Mrs. Bobbsey. "But not everyone knows that, Bert. However, if you children have any presents for your father perhaps you had better be getting them ready. I suppose you are going to give him something, aren't you?" she asked, with a smile.

Instead of answering, the four twins looked one at the other. Each one was trying to keep a secret,

but it was not easy. But before they could reply there was heard from the hall below the noise of a door opening.

"There's Daddy now!" cried Bert.

"Wait for me!" begged Flossie, as she saw the others make a dash out of the room.

"Let me go first!" begged Freddie, and he was so anxious to get ahead of Bert that he stooped down and crawled between the legs of his brother, just as Bert was in the doorway of his mother's room.

So eager was Freddie, and such a shove did he give himself to crawl through Bert's legs that, before he knew what was happening, the fat little lad had slipped, rolled to the top of the stairs, and then he rolled all the way down, bumping from step to step.

But, as it happened, Mr. Bobbsey reached the bottom of the flight of stairs in time to catch Freddie before the little fellow reached the last step.

"Well, well, what's all this?" cried Mr. Bobbsey, holding Freddie in his arms. "Is my little fireman trying to make a rescue?" Mr. Bobbsey often spoke of Freddie as a "fireman", since the little fellow was so fond of playing that game. He had a toy fire-engine that spouted real water, too. And Flossie's pet name was "little fat fairy".

"Is he hurt?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, coming down the stairs.

"No—I'm all right!" protested Freddie. "I—now—I just slipped—that's all. I was in a hurry."

"I should say you were!" laughed his father. "But you are so fat and the stairs are so thickly carpeted that you aren't hurt a bit!"

Freddie was set upon his feet, and, with the others, made a circle about Mr. Bobbsey and the mysterious box. Then, for the first time, the lumber merchant appeared aware of the bulky package in the lower hall.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Something for you, it seems," answered his wife, and smiled.

"It's for your birthday!" cried Nan.

"It came by post!" added Bert.

"And we'd like to see what's in it," remarked Flossie.

"Don't go 'way now," begged Freddie. " 'Cause there's other things for you—I mean for your birthday—I guess they are," he added, not wanting to appear too sure. "But open this box first."

"All right," agreed Mr. Bobbsey. "It's a surprise to me, I'll say that. I don't even know where it's from."

"Maybe it tells on the other side," suggested Bert, who had brought a hammer and a screwdriver for his father to use in opening the box.

"Perhaps," was the answer. "We'll take a look."

As he turned the box on its other side to discover whence it had come, a strange sound was heard issuing from inside.

"Oh!" cried Flossie. "It sounds like a little baby!"

"Nonsense!" laughed her mother. "There would be no baby in such a box!"

Mr. Bobbsey now had the box turned on the other side, and there appeared a card which read:

"From Mr. and Mrs. Henry Watson of Clover Bank!"

"Oh, Mr. Watson remembered your birthday!

How nice!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey. "I didn't think he knew it."

"Nor did I," said Mr. Bobbsey, as he got ready to pry off the box cover.

As he moved the box, in order to get a better chance to pry off the cover, again their came from inside it a strange wailing cry.

"Oh, Daddy! Open it—quick!" cried Freddie. "There must be a baby inside the box!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey. "Nobody would put a baby in a box like that and send it by post!"

The queer noises sounded again, and, really, they seemed to be such cries as a baby might make.

"Open the box! Open the box!" cried Nan, much excited, and Mr. Bobbsey hurriedly began using the hammer and screwdriver while the twins and their mother leaned eagerly forward.

CHAPTER III

AN INVITATION

NEITHER Mr. nor Mrs. Bobbsey thought for a moment that a baby was in the box. Still, there was certainly something very queer about the noises that came from the package.

"It sure is a baby," murmured Flossie.

"It's a queer baby then," declared Nan. "I can see a lot of green and red and yellow things, and no baby is that colour!"

For by this time her father had removed some of the boards from the box and a view could be had inside. And, as Nan had said, there was a glimpse of something red, green, and yellow.

"Maybe the baby has paint on," suggested Flossie.

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Freddie. "Whoever heard of painting a baby?"

"My doll has paint on, and she's a baby," retorted Flossie. Then the little girl thought of the present she had bought for her father—the folding push-cart hidden in the cupboard under the stairs, and she cried: "Oh, do please hurry, Daddy! Open your present and then maybe you'll get some other presents!"

"Oh, I hardly think so," replied Mr. Bobbsey, still working away with the hammer and the screwdriver.

"I guess this is the only present I'll get this birthday. It was very kind of Mr. Watson to remember me!"

Though he said this, Mr. Bobbsey did not really mean that, for well he knew each of the twins, as well as his wife, would give him something. They had every year since the two older twins were big enough to know about birthdays.

But Flossie and Freddie, thinking their father really meant what he said, burst out eagerly to deny his fear that he was to be forgotten.

"Oh, no, Daddy!" cried Flossie. "You're going to get another present—a lovely one!"

"Yes, and another one too, besides that!" added Freddie.

"You don't mean it!" cried Mr. Bobbsey, pretending to be very much surprised. "Well! Well! I must hurry and finish opening this box, for, after I see what is in it, I'll get the other presents—maybe."

"You sure will!" chuckled Bert.

"Listen!" whispered Nan.

Again came a low, wailing cry from within the box.

"There!" suddenly cried Mr. Bobbsey. He pried off nearly all of the top boards and out from the midst of a lot of vegetables jumped—Snoop! Snoop, the big, black Bobbsey cat!

"Oh!" cried Freddie. "Look at him!"

"How in the world did he get in there?" asked Nan.

But Snoop waved his tail, rubbed up against the legs of fat little Flossie, and gave voice to a miaowing cry.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey. "It was Snoop who was crying like a baby. He was shut up inside that box, and his voice sounded muffled, as if he were

down in the cellar. That's what made it seem to be a baby's cry."

"But how did Snoop get in the box?" asked Freddie.

Mr. Bobbsey turned the package over on to its side and then it was seen how Snoop had got inside. One of the bottom boards was broken. There was a hole large enough for the black cat to have crawled inside, and as Snoop was very like his name, always snooping around in strange places, that is what he had done. He had crawled in through the hole and had curled up among a lot of vegetables. Then, when the box was turned over, so Mr. Bobbsey could read the card telling whence it had come, Snoop could not get out. So he had cried mournfully to be released.

"Oh, it's a lot of vegetables and berries in the box!" said Nan, as she took a look, after Snoop had jumped out and the mystery of the "baby's" cries had been solved.

"Yes, it's quite a load of farm and garden produce," said Mr. Bobbsey. "Mr. Watson must have a large place at Clover Bank. Here's a note," and he picked up one that was stuck in a bunch of beetroot.

The note was from Mr. Watson. It contained only a few short lines, saying:

> "Dear Mr. Bobbsey: My wife and I remembered that this was your birthday, so we send you some of our early vegetables and some berries. You will hear from me again very soon."

"How kind of him!" murmured Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Did Mr. Watson's baby write a letter?" asked Freddie.

"No, she is hardly old enough," answered his mother, while Mr. Bobbsey began lifting out the bunches of early vegetables and the boxes of berries. It was the green, red, and yellow colour of the fruits and vegetables which the children had glimpsed through cracks in the box. So quickly had the farm and garden produce come by post that they were very fresh and good.

"I guess we'll not have any of these for dinner," announced Mr. Bobbsey, as he reached down and rubbed Snoop, who was now purring happily since he was out of the prison into which he had crawled. "And, speaking of dinner, I am ready to eat mine."

"We're going to have pie," declared Bert. "I saw Dinah baking them, and I guess she made some extra ones on account of your birthday, Daddy."

"Did she? That's nice!" laughed Mr. Bobbsey. "You must have been in the kitchen to find out about the pies, Bert."

"Yes, Daddy, I was," admitted Bert, with a quick look at Nan. But she seemed to be thinking of something else.

"Come now, children, we will eat and then we'll unpack the vegetables from Clover Bank," suggested Mrs. Bobbsey. "What a pretty name for a place," she went on. "It must be delightful country up there."

"I wish we could go to the country again," said Bert. "School will soon be over and we'll have a long holiday."

"Where are we going this holiday?" asked Nan.

"We haven't decided yet," answered her mother. "But come—we shall be late for dinner unless we hurry, and that makes more work for Dinah!"

She led the way to the dining-room, with Flossie and Freddie whispering on the way:

"When can we give Daddy his presents?"

"You might as well get them now, I suppose," said Mrs. Bobbsey, with a laugh as she glanced at her husband. "There will be no peace at the table until you do, and you won't eat anything until this excitement is over. Get the presents now!"

"Whoopee!" yelled Bert, who was almost as excited as were the smaller twins.

"Mine's in the cellar!" cried Freddie, as he made a dash for the kitchen.

"Be careful going down the stairs!" warned his mother.

"Mine's upstairs," remarked Nan.

"So's mine!" added Bert, with a quick look at her. "I didn't see you up there hiding it, though," he went on.

"And I didn't see you," laughed Nan. "I came in through the kitchen."

"So'd I!" cried Bert, with a chuckle.

"I did, too!" added Flossie. "And my present's under the front stairs in the little dark cupboard. Don't you look until I get it for you, Daddy!" she warned. "Don't peek, will you?"

"All right, I won't!" promised Mr. Bobbsey. "See, my eyes are tight shut—you'll have to lead me to the table, Mother," he went on to his wife.

"Oh, isn't this fun!" laughed Flossie, as the

children scattered to get the birthday presents from the various hiding-places.

"Well, whut's gwine on now?" demanded Dinah, as she saw Freddie dash through the kitchen and down the cellar stairs.

"It's time for the secret!" he breathlessly explained.

"Well, Ah suah am glad ob dat!" chuckled the coloured cook. "Mah nice supper am 'bout ruined wif all dis delay!"

They were soon all gathered about the table, Mr. Bobbsey still with his eyes tightly shut. One after the other, the twins walked up and put their presents in front of him. Not until all four packages were there did Mrs. Bobbsey call:

"Ready! Open your eyes!"

When he opened them and saw the packages, Mr. Bobbsey pretended that he had suddenly awakened, and was still dreaming. He rubbed his eyes and said:

"There must be some mistake!"

"What mistake, Daddy?" asked Nan.

"Why, all these presents!" was the answer. "I have only *one* birthday, but there are *four* presents! I'd better send three of them back!"

"No! No!"

"They're all for you!"

"Every one!"

"They're all yours—all four!"

Thus cried the Bobbsey twins in joyous excitement. Of course Mr. Bobbsey knew that all the while; but he did love to tease the twins. Then he took up first the bundle which Freddie had hidden down in the cellar.

"Oh, what lovely flowers!" cried the birthday man.

"Oh, how I love flowers!" and he buried his nose in them.

"I picked 'em—every one!" cried Freddie, in great delight. "And there's something else in there, too, Daddy! Down in the bottom! Look!"

"Well, I declare. A baseball! Of all things!" exclaimed Mr. Bobbsey as he took it out. "That's just what I've been wanting—a baseball so I could have a little game at noon with the men in the lumber-yard. It's a fine ball, too—and such a bouncer!" he went on, as he threw it to the floor and caught it as it rebounded.

"And if you don't want it—or if you get tired of it," said Freddie, "why, you can give it to me. Sammie Shull and I are going to get up a baseball nine."

"All right," his father said. "If I find it's too small for me and the men—and it looks as if it might be too small—you may take it, Freddie."

"Yes—that's what I thought," said the lad, while his father and mother smiled at each other.

"That's my present to you," said Flossie, pointing to the square box she had hidden in the stair cup-board. "I hope you'll like it."

Mr. Bobbsey took out the doll's folding push-cart. First there was a puzzled look on his face. Then he smiled as he cried:

"Oh, I see, this is a new kind of necktie!"

"No, it isn't!" protested Flossie.

"Then it must be an umbrella to keep off the rain," went on the lumber merchant, pretending to be puzzled about the folding push-cart, though, all the while, he knew what it was.

"Oh, no, Daddy! 'Tisn't an umbrella!" cried

Flossie. "It's a little carriage for my doll. You unfold it and bend out the wheels. Then, when you take me for a walk and I get tired of carrying my doll, you can put it in the push-cart and wheel her for me. I think that's a nice present for you—isn't it, Daddy?"

"It's the most beautiful present I ever got!" declared her father, with a laugh, "and I'm going to give you a kiss for it. I must also kiss Freddie for the baseball. That was a fine present, too! That is, unless my little fireman is too big to be kissed?" and Mr. Bobbsey looked at Freddie a moment after he had kissed Flossie.

"I don't mind being kissed—on your birthday," said the little fellow. "But not much at other times. I'm getting too big for it."

"So you are," said Mr. Bobbsey, with a laugh. "Well, bring in your doll, Flossie, and let's see how she fits my new birthday folding push-cart," and again Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey laughed at each other.

The doll had been put in and wheeled about. But there were still two packages to be opened—those which Nan and Bert had put beside their father's plate.

These gifts were not quite as " 'riginal" as those Flossie and Freddie had bought, for the older twins had asked their mother what she thought their father would like. With the help of her mother, Nan had bought Mr. Bobbsey a bath-robe which, he said, was just what he had long needed. Bert's present was a golf sweater which, his father stated, was just the colour he had long been hoping to get.

"This is the best birthday I ever remember!"

declared Mr. Bobbsey, when his wife had presented him with a new wallet in which to carry his money, cards, and papers. "What with the flowers, the baseball, the push-cart, the robe, the sweater, the wallet, and the box of fruits and vegetables from Clover Bank—why, I never got so many things before!"

It was a jolly birthday celebration, and the children talked of little else while the meal was going on. Presently Nan turned the conversation another way by asking:

"What do you suppose Mr. Watson meant by saying you would soon hear from him again, Daddy?"

"I don't know, my dear, unless he meant that he would write now and again to let us hear how the baby was getting along," was the answer. "I think Mr. Watson must mean he is going to write again to tell us about Baby Jenny."

But a letter came from Clover Bank before any of the Bobbseys thought it possible to receive one. Just as dinner was finished there came a ring at the doorbell, and Flossie cried:

"Oh, maybe it's more presents for Daddy's birthday."

Instead of a delivery man, however, it proved to be a boy from the post office with a special-delivery letter. These letters come at any time of the day or night, after the regular mail is delivered.

"A special delivery!" murmured Mrs. Bobbsey, as she saw the blue stamp with the picture on it of a messenger boy running. "I wonder who it is from?"

"It's easy to tell that even without opening it," said Mr. Bobbsey. "It's from Henry Watson of Clover Bank. His name is on the envelope."

"Oh, he said you'd hear from him again soon, and you have!" cried Nan. "Do open it, Daddy, and see what it's about."

When Mr. Bobbsey read the letter a smile came to his face.

"Well, this seems to settle the summer holiday problem for us, Mother!" he exclaimed. "This is an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Watson and also from Baby Jenny to come and spend the summer with them at Clover Bank. Among other things, Mr. Watson writes:

> " 'Can't you and the children visit us? Baby would surely love to see the Bobbsey twins.' "

"Oh, can we go?" chorused the Bobbsey twins.

But before either Mr. or Mrs. Bobbsey could answer there sounded a loud crash out in the kitchen, and the voice of Dinah cried:

"Dar! Now luck whut yo' all done! Mah goodness!"

CHAPTER IV

THE PRIZE OFFER

SILENCE followed the crash and the excited call of Dinah. Mrs. Bobbsey thought something serious might have happened, and she said to her husband:

"Perhaps you had better go to see what it is."

That it was nothing serious was made plain a moment later, even before Mr. Bobbsey reached the place, for Dinah could be heard laughing, and between her chuckles came the voice of Sam Johnson, her husband, complaining:

"Git offen me now! Does yo' heah? Git offen mah haid! Mah good lan', such goin's on as dere am heah! Git off, Ah tells yo'!"

When the Bobbseys entered the kitchen they saw Sam dancing around and trying to reach something on his head. This something proved to be Snoop, the big black cat, who was clinging with his claws to Sam's thick, kinky, black, woolly hair.

"Snoop suah does know when he's got a soft place!" chuckled Dinah, who was laughing so hard that she could not go to the aid of her husband.

"Take him offen me! Take him off, Ah tells yo'!" begged Sam, dancing about the kitchen.

"I'll get him," offered Nan, who had trained Snoop to do a few tricks. "Stand still, Sam," begged the

little girl, "and I'll get Snoop off for you! How'd he get on your head?"

"He done jumped there—dat's how he got," explained Sam, with a rueful face as he did what Nan advised and remained in one spot. Then the little girl brought a chair over close to the coloured man-of-all-work and, climbing up, lifted Snoop down. As soon as the cat felt himself in the hands of Nan, the animal released his claws from their firm hold in Sam's hair. It was this grip of the cat's claws that had prevented Sam himself from lifting Snoop down. The more he pulled on the animal the tighter Snoop clung, for he was afraid of falling.

"What happened, Dinah?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, who, with her husband, stood in the kitchen doorway, laughing at Sam's rueful face.

"Oh, I guess dat cat Snoop mus' 'a' had a birfday himse'f," explained Dinah. "He's dat smart an' libely he mus' feel laik he's about one yeah old—jumpin' 'round laik he was."

"What did he do?" asked Bert.

"Oh, he jump up on a chair when I wasn't lookin'!" went on Dinah. "An' his tail knock a dish offen de table an' bruk it—bruk de dish Ah means. Den I grabbed up de broom to make a swoop at Snoop an' just den Sam come in an' I hit him 'stid ob hittin' de cat. An' dat scared Snoop, I guess, 'cause he make a jump an' he git right up on top ob de do' and den—den——"

But Dinah was laughing so heartily at the recollection of what had happened that she could not go on with the story. So Sam continued it by adding:

"Dat cat he jes' jump right down offen de do' right

on top ob mah haid, an' dar he stuck laik a chestnut burr! Golly, but he suah did stick his claws in mah ha'r!" and then Sam chuckled.

"Well, I'm glad it was no worse," remarked Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile. "One broken dish doesn't matter, especially on a birthday. But perhaps you had better take Snoop out, Nan, so he won't make any more trouble for Dinah."

"I'll give him a ride in Flossie's doll's push-cart that she got for Daddy!" laughed Nan.

"No, you will not!" protested the other Bobbsey girl. "I'm going to give my doll a ride. Come on, Daddy," she begged. "Let's take a walk and ride my doll."

"And let's have a catch with my ball—I mean the ball I gave you!" cried Freddie.

"Maybe I'd better put on my new robe and wear my new birthday sweater before I go doll-pushing and ball-playing," suggested Mr. Bobbsey, with a laugh.

"Well, don't take the new wallet I gave you," warned his wife. "I put a penny in, for luck, and you might lose it."

But after again admiring the robe and the sweater, the gifts of Bert and Nan, Mr. Bobbsey laid them aside and had a few catches with Freddie, using the new ball. Then he wheeled Flossie's folding push-cart, giving the little girl's best doll a ride.

After that the four twins went off by themselves to play with some of their boy and girl chums in the twilight of the fading June day, while Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey sat on the porch.

"Do you really think?" asked *Mrs. Bobbsey of her*

husband, "that you will take the children to Clover Bank for the summer?"

"I don't know," he answered. "What do you think? Mr. Watson seems to want to have us go. I know he has a large place there with plenty of room in the house, and there is a big farm, an orchard, and woods near by where the twins could play. There is also a creek and a little lake, I believe."

"It sounds like a wonderful place to spend the summer," responded his wife. "And we always go somewhere. Just where is Clover Bank?"

"It is outside the town of Hitchville," was the answer. "It's about a day's ride in the car. We could get there without much trouble."

"Well, if you think they really want us, suppose you write and tell Mr. Watson if he will take the whole family for the summer we'll be glad to come," suggested Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I know the children will like it," remarked their father.

Twilight faded into darkness and, tired with their evening play, the Bobbsey twins came slowly back home. Soon Flossie and Freddie were undressed and in bed, with Bert and Nan getting ready to follow them a little later. But first the two older twins wanted to know more about the plans for the summer.

"We have about decided to go to Clover Bank," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Oh, goodie!" exclaimed Nan. "Then I can take out Baby Jenny."

"I hope there's a place where I can swim and catch fish," murmured Bert.

"Are you going to swim after the fish and catch them?" asked Nan, with a laugh.

"Oh, you know what I mean," he answered. "I can't do both at the same time, of course. Though once, when Danny Rugg and I were in swimming, a fish brushed its tail against my legs and I almost caught it, only I wasn't quick enough."

"I think there will be plenty of swimming, fishing, and other fun at Mr. Watson's Clover Bank place," said Mr. Bobbsey. "And now I think you and Nan had better see which of you will be first asleep," he went on, for it was getting late. Dinner had been delayed longer than usual because of the birthday celebration, and the children had been allowed to stay up a little later than was customary.

"Oh, won't we have fun in Clover Bank!" whispered Nan to her brother, as they went up the stairs.

"I just guess we will!" he answered. "I can hardly wait for the time to come!"

"Me either. Good night!"

"Good night!" answered Bert, as he went softly into the room where he slept with Freddie. Nan slept with Flossie. Both the small twins were sound asleep. So were Bert and Nan a little later.

School had not yet closed for the summer. There was about another week of classes before the long holiday. And the morning after their father's birthday the Bobbsey twins started out for the school soon after the first bell began ringing.

"Hallo, Danny!" called Bert when he saw the Rugg boy coming up the street. "Don't you wish you had another snowball to break a church window with?" and Bert laughed as he recalled what had happened

in the winter, when Danny had broken a stained-glass window and had blamed Bert for it. But the truth had come out, through the loss of Danny's gold ring, and Danny had begged Bert's pardon, so the boys were friends once more.

"Yes, a pile of snow would feel good just about now," agreed Danny. "It sure is a hot day! I'll be glad when school closes."

"So'll I," said Bert. "Where're you going this summer?"

"Down to the seaside, I guess," Danny answered.

"We're going to the country," went on Bert. "To a place called Clover Bank. It's near Hitchville."

"Oh, that's a fine place!" cried Danny. "I know a fellow who went there. There's grand fishing in the creek!"

"I'm glad of it," said Bert. Then the boys and girls passed into the school. I cannot say that anyone was much interested in lessons that day. It was too hot to study much. Realizing this, the teacher in the room where Bert and Nan sat had an idea. She was trying to get the children to write a "composition", which, as most of you know, isn't easy work.

"You children will find it much easier to write compositions," Miss Skell said, "if you will take as subjects something you know about. Instead of trying to write about the stars, as some of you did last week, try to write about something on earth. You don't know much about the stars—no one does. But you may know a great deal about a nest that some birds have built in your apple tree. So write about those birds.

"And while I am talking about compositions," the

teacher went on, "I want to say that I am going to offer a prize to the boy or girl who, during the holiday, will write the best story, or composition, about something that happens to him or her this summer. Write about something real, in the best way you can, and bring the story back to school when it opens again in the autumn.

"The best compositions will be read before the class, and I will decide who is to get the prize, which will be a set of books. The winner may choose the books from a list I will have on my desk."

Murmurs of delight and surprise were heard about the room. This was something new—a prize for a summer composition! At once the children, who had been dull and listless because of the heat, seemed bright and cheerful. Miss Skell smiled at the success of her plan.

"Now we will have some practise work in writing compositions," she went on. "You will be better able to do the work this summer when there is no school if you practise a bit now. So we will begin!"

Every boy and girl was most eager now, especially Nan Bobbsey. She was always good at composition work—perhaps not the best in the room, but certainly better than Bert, though he tried. But, really, Bert cared more about playing games than about writing compositions.

"Oh, if I could only win that prize!" thought Nan. "It would be wonderful! I wonder what I can find to write about? Perhaps something may happen while we are at Clover Bank."

Danny Rugg raised his hand, indicating that he wanted to ask a question.

"What is it, Danny?" inquired the teacher.

"How long must the composition be?" the boy asked. "I mean how many pages?"

"Oh, as many as you like," was the reply. "But it must not be too short!" went on Miss Skell quickly. "I want more than a few sentences. Try to make a story about what happens to you this summer—a story such as you might read in a book. Who knows—perhaps some of you, when you grow up, may write books. I hope you will."

"I'd love to write a book!" murmured Nan to Nellie Parks, who sat with her.

"I'd rather read books than write them," whispered Nellie.

"Quiet now, children, if you please," suggested Miss Skell, for she had allowed a little whispering following her announcement of the prize offer. "Now we will begin our composition work. You may each write me a short one on the subject of what happened to you yesterday after school—in the afternoon, evening, or night."

Just as Bert Bobbsey was settling himself to his task, the door opened and a girl from one of the higher classes entered with a note which she gave to Miss Skell. The teacher read it quickly, and then said in a low voice:

"Mr. Tarton wants to see you in his office, Bert."

What could this mean? Mr. Tarton was the headmaster of the school. Usually it was not very pleasant to have to go to his office.

Bert slowly left his seat. He, too, was wondering what could have happened.

CHAPTER V

OFF FOR CLOVER BANK

NAN BOBBSEY and some of her girl chums, as well as Danny Rugg and the boys with whom Bert Bobbsey played, also wondered why Bert had to go to the headmaster's office.

"Did Bert do anything?" whispered Grace Lavine, who sat behind Nan.

"I don't know," was the low-voiced reply. "I don't think so. I didn't see him."

"Well, anyhow, he couldn't have thrown any snowballs," said Nellie Parks. "I mean like the time he once did and Danny said he broke the church window."

"No," agreed Nan.

"Was Bert fighting with any of the fellows?" inquired Charlie Mason of Danny, who sat near him. "Mr. Tarton doesn't like fighting."

"I know he doesn't," Danny answered. "But I don't believe Bert was. It must be for something else."

"Attend to your lessons now, children. Bert will be back soon," said Miss Skell.

Nan gave a sigh of relief on hearing this. It could not be so very serious, then.

As for Bert, his heart was beating rather faster than

usual as he entered Mr. Tarton's office, but the smile with which the head of the school greeted the pupil seemed to tell the boy that he was not brought down for anything serious.

"Good morning, Bert!" said the headmaster. "I called you here to see if you have a top in your pocket—you know what I mean—a top that spins with a string wound around it. Have you such a top?"

"Why—er—yes—yes, sir," stammered the boy. What in the world could Mr. Tarton want of a top? Could he have turned childish and have a desire to play with a top in his office, Bert wondered.

Then another thought came into the mind of the lad. Perhaps Mr. Tarton thought Bert had been playing with a top during class time. So the boy said:

"But I didn't have it out in the room, Mr. Tarton! Really I didn't! I was spinning it in front of the school, but I put it in my pocket when I came in and——"

"Yes, I know you did, Bert," and again Mr. Tarton smiled. "I saw you spinning your top, and that's why I sent for you. I want you to come and spin the top for me in front of the class in science."

This was more and more puzzling.

The headmaster must have seen that Bert was puzzled and a bit worried, for he laughed a little and said:

"It's all right, Bert. The science class is studying motion, and I want to illustrate to them the principle of the gyroscope. I have that kind of a top here, but I remembered seeing you spin yours, and that it was a large red one, which can easily be seen when you spin it on the platform in front of the class. You see

I want to show the science boys and girls the difference between a gyroscope top and the common top."

"And you want me to spin a top in school—for a lesson?" asked Bert in surprise.

"That's it—yes," answered the headmaster. "I think you know what a gyroscope top is, don't you?" Bert did, having been given one for Christmas. Mr. Tarton quickly brought his queer top out and spun it.

A gyroscope top is a heavy, small wheel fitted inside a round ring of metal, and the ring has a sort of top peg on it. When the heavy wheel inside the metal ring is set spinning by means of a string wound about it and pulled off, the wheel goes so fast that it will hold up the metal ring in any position. Thus the gryoscope top will spin upside down, lying on its side, and in many other positions.

"But your top will spin in one way only, and that is standing straight up, Bert," said Mr. Tarton. "That's what I want the boys and girls in the science class to understand. Of course I could tell them about it, but they will learn much more quickly if they see the two different tops spinning in front of them. So come with me now, if you please, and bring your top."

Bert could hardly help smiling as he followed the headmaster to the seniors' part of the building. It seemed so queer to be asked, as a favour, to spin a top in class. But the older boys and girls were as much in earnest as was Mr. Tarton. They wanted to learn this rule about spinning bodies, for the earth we live on, you know, spins about like a giant top. So the older boys and girls did not laugh when Mr.

Tarton wound up and spun the gyroscope nor when Bert set his red top spinning. They asked many questions and seemed eager to learn. Bert himself was much interested.

"You are a good top-spinner," said Mr. Tarton to him when the lesson was over. "You may go back to your class, and you may take the gyroscope top with you and tell Miss Skell I said you could spin it and show the smaller boys and girls how it works."

So the mystery of why Bert was sent to the head's office was soon solved. Going back to his room, in a few words Bert told Miss Skell about it. He also delivered the message about the gyroscope, and soon the boys and girls were much interested in watching Bert spin it on Miss Skell's desk.

"If she'd let us write a composition about that funny top I believe I could do a good one," said Nellie Parks to Nan when the class was let out for the noon break.

"But the prize composition must be about something that happens on our summer holiday," answered Nan. "Oh, I do hope I win the prize!"

"I hope you do, too," said Nellie generously. "There's no use in me hoping for it. I never can write a decent composition. But I hope you win, Nan!"

"Thanks," replied Bert's sister.

On the way home Nan told her brother how worried she had been when he was sent to the headmaster's office.

"I was worried myself, at first," Bert admitted. "But I had to laugh when he asked me to spin the top."

"I wish Mr. Tarton would send for me and ask

me to turn somersaults in class!" laughed Freddie, when he heard his older brother and sister talking about what had happened. "I can do them fine—look!"

And on the grass verge beside the pavement he flopped down and turned three somersaults one after the other.

"Good!" cried Bert.

"I can do that, too!" declared Flossie. "Want to see me?"

"No! No!" objected Nan. "You mustn't! Not here on the street! You're a girl and Freddie is a boy—that's different!"

"Well, I can turn somersaults as good as he can!" declared Flossie.

But by this time they were nearly home, and as Flossie was eager to see what Dinah had for lunch, she ran on ahead, forgetting about the somersaults.

Around the lunch-table that noon Bert told about the spinning tops, and Nan spoke of Miss Skell's offer of a prize for the best composition on the summer holiday happenings.

"Mother, do you think anything will happen when we get to Clover Bank?" asked the little girl eagerly.

"Many things may happen," was the answer. "I hope they will all be happy happenings, though; for you can just as well write about them as about sad ones, I should think."

"Oh, yes!" agreed Nan. "I want them to be happy and funny."

The end of the school term was near. By Thursday the last examinations would be over and then would come the closing session.

It was all settled about the Bobbsey twins going to Clover Bank. Mr. Bobbsey had written to Mr. Watson, thanking him, his wife, and also Baby Jenny, for the kind invitation to come to spend the summer at the big country place.

"We will drive to Hitchville in the car," Mr. Bobbsey said, in talking over the plans. "Clover Bank is the name of Mr. Watson's farm, and it is just outside Hitchville."

"Will Dinah and Sam come with us?" asked Flossie, for she loved the dear old coloured couple who had so long looked after the children.

"No, Sam and Dinah are going to have a holiday, too," Mrs. Bobbsey answered.

"Are we going to take Snoop and Snap?" asked Freddie, as he looked at the dog and cat who were playing together out in the yard. The two were great friends.

"I fancy there will be many animals on Mr. Watson's farm, so there will be no need to take Snap and Snoop," Mrs. Bobbsey replied. "We will send our dog and cat away to be boarded for the summer as we have done before."

"Well, I'm going to take my fishing-rod, anyhow," declared Bert.

"And I'm going to take my toy fire-engine," declared Freddie. "The farm-house might catch fire and I could put it out."

"Don't take too many toys," warned his mother. "Your engine is all right, and Flossie may take one of her dolls. But we haven't room for all your things."

It was not easy for the two smaller twins to leave their many playthings behind, and Flossie could

hardly decide which of her many dolls she wanted with her. But at last the choices were made, Bert and Nan took what they wanted (Nan's choice was a book or two), and finally everything was packed ready to leave.

The last day of school came. Good-bye messages were exchanged and pupils and teachers separated to meet again in the autumn, which now seemed a long way off.

"Don't forget about the prize composition!" called Miss Skell to her pupils.

"We'll remember!" promised Nan.

The Bobbsey twins could hardly wait for the hours to pass until they should be in the car and on the road to Hitchville. But at last the house was closed. Snap and Snoop had been sent away, not without many farewells on the part of Flossie and Freddie. Sam and Dinah had departed to visit relatives. Then away from Lakeport rolled the Bobbsey family.

"I hope a lot of things happen before we get back," remarked Nan to her mother. "I want them to put in my composition."

It was a pleasant day for the start of the trip. Mr. Bobbsey expected to reach Hitchville early in the evening.

Most of the morning had passed and they had covered nearly a hundred miles of the journey when came a question which was always asked, sooner or later, on all the trips the Bobbseys took.

"When do we eat?" demanded Freddie, about eleven o'clock.

"Why, you aren't hungry now, are you?" inquired his mother.

"Sure I am," he said. "I can eat a lot. And I wish I had a drink of milk."

"We didn't bring any milk along," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "I was afraid it would turn sour, the weather is so warm."

"I fancy we can get some milk to drink with our lunch at that farm-house," said Mr. Bobbsey, pointing to one a short distance ahead. "I see cows in the field at the back of it, and they must sell milk. We'll stop and inquire."

A basket of Dinah's best lunch had been put up to eat on the trip, and milk would make a welcome addition to it, Mrs. Bobbsey thought. Her husband was right in his guess about the farm-house. When the car stopped there the lady said they would be glad to sell as much milk as the children could drink.

"Bring your lunch in and eat it under the trees in the yard," she invited. "It's cool and shady there. I'll bring the milk up from the cellar."

"It will be nice to get out of the car for a change," said Mrs. Bobbsey, and soon there was a jolly little picnic party under the trees in front of the old-fashioned farm-house.

The children would have been pleased to stay there most of the afternoon, to look about the place, but when lunch was over and each of the twins had had two glasses of milk, Mr. Bobbsey suggested that they had better travel on, as he did not want to arrive in Hitchville after dark.

Back into the car they climbed, and with many thanks to the good-natured farm lady, once more they were on their way. Flossie and Freddie were quieter now, as they always were after lunch, and even Bert

and Nan did not talk as much as they had during the first part of the trip.

But soon the quiet of the journey was broken by Mrs. Bobbsey, who gave a little jump. Their mother was sitting in the rear with Flossie and Freddie. She exclaimed:

"There's something in this car!"

"Why, of course there is!" laughed her husband. "The whole Bobbsey family is in it!"

"No, I mean something else—something extra! Some kind of an animal!" insisted his wife. "I can feel it moving around my feet! Listen! What is it? Stop the car, Dick! There is some animal in it!"

CHAPTER VI

THE LONELY CABIN

MRS. BOBBSEY'S voice showed that she was in earnest, so her husband lost no time in guiding the car to the side of the road, to be out of the way of passing motorists, and then he brought it to a quick stop with a grinding and squeaking of the brakes.

"Now what is it?" he asked, turning back to look at his wife.

"I said there was some strange animal—maybe more than one of them—in our car!"

"How could there be?" asked Mr. Bobbsey with a laugh. "That is, unless you call the twins animals, and they are—in a way."

"No, I don't mean them," answered his wife. "Oh!" she gave a little scream. "They're crawling around my feet. And listen to them!"

Now that it was quiet, Mr. Bobbsey, too, could hear a faint whimpering sound. By this time Flossie and Freddie, who had dozed off into a sleepy little nap after lunch, awakened. They sat up, rubbed their eyes, and Flossie cried:

"What are we stopping for? Are we at Clover Bank? I don't see any clover or any bank, either!"

"We stopped because your mother thought she felt and heard some kind of an animal in the car,"

explained Mr. Bobbsey, who did not know quite what it was all about, for he could see nothing as he looked over into the rear of the machine. But that he could see nothing was not to be wondered at, for the space was piled with luggage, robes, and things the children had brought with them, so there was scarcely room for Mrs. Bobbsey and the two small twins.

"I didn't *think* I felt or heard something!" said the children's mother in firm tones. "I *felt* something and *heard* something, and I feel it now! What is it?"

Then Freddie spoke up and said:

"I expect maybe it's the kittens!"

"Yes," agreed Flossie, with a little smile. "It must be the kittens you feel, Mother. And I can hear them mewing now. Can't you hear the kittens mewing, Freddie?"

"Sure I can!" was the reply.

"Kittens? Kittens? What kittens?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"It's the five little kittens Flossie and I put in a box and brought along with us," explained Freddie. "I expect they got out and it's them crawling over your feet, Mother."

"Five kittens can mew a whole lot," added Flossie.

"Five kittens! What in the world do the children mean?" cried Mrs. Bobbsey. She reached down into the midst of the baggage and other things and brought up a cardboard box containing one lonely little kitten.

"I expect the other four are crawling around down there," said Freddie calmly. "There were five of them; weren't there, Flossie?"

"Yes, five," answered the little girl.

"I can feel them!" sighed Mrs. Bobbsey. "Oh, my goodness!" She reached down again, and, one at a time, brought up four more kittens from the bottom of the car. She put them in the box with the other.

"Oh, aren't they cute!" cried Nan.

"One's almost as black as Snoop!" said Bert.

"Where in the world did you children get these kittens?" asked their mother.

"Back at the farm-house," replied Freddie. "We thought we better have some animals to take out to Clover Bank in case Mr. Watson hasn't any, so Flossie and I put these five kittens in the box and put them in our car."

"There were six," added Flossie; "but we left one with the mother cat so she wouldn't be lonesome."

"Do you mean you youngsters packed these cats up back at the farm-house where we got the milk?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Yes, Daddy," said Freddie. "We did."

"But don't you know that was a wrong thing to do?" scolded his mother. "These kittens weren't yours to take. They belong to someone at the farm where they were so kind to us."

"Yes," answered Flossie calmly. "They belong to the red-haired boy there. I asked him if the kittens were his and he said they were. Then Freddie asked him if we could have them and he said we could. Didn't he, Freddie?"

"That's what he did," was the answer. "So we took them."

"Well, I should say you did!" and now Mrs. Bobbsey could not help laughing. "But why didn't you ask me if you could do this?"

"We—now—we didn't want to bother you, because you always have so much to think about when we go on holiday," explained Freddie.

"So we just took the kittens," added his sister.

"Um! Yes! Well, we'll have to take them right back," said Mr. Bobbsey. "Perhaps that red-haired boy didn't know what he was talking about, children, when he said you could have the kittens. They may not have been his to give away, and the farmer or his wife may want them to catch mice in the barn. Yes, we must take the kittens back!"

"Oh, couldn't we please keep just one?" begged Flossie.

"The little black one that looks like Snoop!" pleaded Freddie.

But both Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey were firm—the kittens must go back where they came from.

"Though it will delay you to turn about and go back to the farm, won't it?" Mrs. Bobbsey asked her husband.

"A little," he replied. "But it cannot be helped. However, the roads are good and we can make a little faster time the remainder of the day. I wish we didn't have to, but I feel that it is the best thing to do—take the kittens back."

Flossie and Freddie felt a bit sad over this, and even Bert and Nan would have liked one of the pets. But they thought their father and mother knew best.

"Very likely Mr. Watson will have plenty of

animals at Clover Bank," said Mrs. Bobbsey, to console the sorrowing small twins.

"And, anyhow, there's the baby," said Nan.

"That's so," agreed Flossie. "I suppose maybe it's better that we don't keep the kittens, Freddie. They might mew in the night and wake up Baby Jenny."

"I suppose so," agreed her twin brother.

So the car was turned about and the return trip made in good time. The farm lady was rather surprised to see the travellers again.

"Did you come back for more milk?" she asked.

"No, thank you," said Mr. Bobbsey, with a laugh. "We came to return some of your property that my small twins thoughtlessly took."

"My property?" exclaimed the lady. And how she laughed when Mrs. Bobbsey handed her the cardboard box of kittens! "Oh, my goodness! You could have kept these, and welcome!" she said. "We have all the cats we want."

"I'm afraid we could hardly look after them," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Thank you, just the same. Dear me, when I felt them wiggling at my feet, I couldn't imagine what they were!"

"I can well believe that," said the farm lady. "Well, I'll give old Mary back her family," and she restored to the mother cat the squirming, hungry kittens, and Flossie and Freddie viewed with delight how eager the five were to snuggle down in the warm basket with the one little pussy that had not been taken away.

"Now you haven't hidden any more animals in the car, have you?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, as he made ready to start again.

"No more," declared the small twins, and Mrs. Bobbsey looked to make sure no stray puppy had crawled in among the things.

Perhaps because Mr. Bobbsey was in a hurry to make up the time and distance lost by returning to the farm-house, he missed a side road altogether, or perhaps it was because he took a wrong turn at some crossroad on the journey, but certain it was that, late in the afternoon when he came to a signpost and read the names of the towns printed on it, he said:

"We must have come the wrong way."

"What do you mean?" asked his wife.

"We aren't on the road to Hitchville," was the answer. "To get there we have to pass through Midvale, and this sign doesn't say anything about that place. I must have taken a wrong turning."

"It is getting late, too," remarked his wife.

"No harm done, though," said Mr. Bobbsey. "I will ask the first person I meet which is the best road to Midvale. Once we are there, I can easily find the way to Hitchville."

"Shall we get there tonight?" asked Nan.

"Why, of course we shall," declared her father.

As a matter of fact, he concluded later that he was not as sure of this as he wished he could be. But there was only one thing to do, and that was to go on until they met another motorist or someone of whom they could inquire.

For a mile or so the road was deserted. But presently, on making a turn, the Bobbseys saw coming towards them a farmer, driving a bony horse drawing a rickety old waggon.

"Hallo there!" called Mr. Bobbsey, halting his car.

"Whoa—up!" the man directed his horse, and the animal seemed glad enough to stop. "Afternoon, stranger," greeted the farmer. "Are you looking for someone?"

"I'm looking for the road to Midvale, so I can get to Hitchville," explained Mr. Bobbsey. "Or perhaps you know of a short cut to Hitchville."

The farmer shook his head.

"No, there isn't any short cut," he said. "You'll have to go to Midvale, as that's the only place where there's a bridge over the river within ten miles. But you're 'way off the road to Midvale, even—'way off!"

"That's what I was afraid of," commented Mr. Bobbsey. "What shall I do?"

The farmer considered matters for a moment and then replied:

"Well, if I was you I'd keep right on this road until you get to the next crossroad. Turn to the right there and keep on for about five miles and you'll come to the road that takes you to Midvale. After that you'll be all right."

"Yes, after that I'll be all right," agreed Mr. Bobbsey. "But how about this road and the next—are they pretty good?"

"The roads are good enough," replied the farmer, as he looked at the Bobbsey twins. "But they're quite lonesome. However, you can go faster in that machine than I can in mine, and it won't take you long. Good luck to you! You've got quite a load of boys and girls there," he commented.

"Yes, quite a load, thank you," answered Mr. Bobbsey.

"We had five kittens, only we had to take them back," piped up Flossie.

"Did you? Well, I've got a batch of 'em out at my place I'll let you have," chuckled the farmer. "Just keep right along as I told you an' you'll come out all right. G'lang!" he called to his horse, and with a nod he drove by, while Mr. Bobbsey, with a word of thanks, let in the clutch and away they rode once more.

"It's too bad!" murmured Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Are we lost?" asked Freddie, half hoping they were.

"Of course not!" laughed his father. "We'll soon be in Midvale, and it isn't far from there to Hitchville. We'll be all right. But I don't call this a very good road," he went on, as he had to slow up over a rough and rutty place.

The farmer's idea of good roads did not seem to be the same as Mr. Bobbsey's, and the farther they went the worse the way became, until in one place it was necessary to drop into second gear to get through a stretch of deep sand.

It was now getting late in the afternoon and they had not yet come to the road which the farmer said led to Midvale. Then, to make matters worse, all at once there was a sharp hiss of escaping air.

"Puncture!" cried Bert.

"So it is!" sighed his father. "Well, luckily we have a spare wheel on, and it won't take long to change."

But it took longer than he thought, for the road was sandy, and the jack, for lifting up the car so the wheel could be changed, sank deeply into the soft

earth. By the time some boards and flat stones had been found to put under the jack, it was getting dusk.

"You'll hardly have the wheel changed before it's dark," said Mrs. Bobbsey with a look around the lonely road.

"I'm afraid not," agreed her husband. "But we can drive after dark, you know."

"I don't like it much—on strange roads," she said. "I wish there were some place where we could stay, but there doesn't seem to be."

Nan, who had got out to walk around with Flossie and Freddie while Bert helped his father, now came back with the small twins in time to hear what her mother said.

"There's a house just around the turn in the road where we might stay," said Nan.

"A house?" inquired her mother.

"Yes. A log cabin. Come, I'll show it to you!"

"Shall I go and look?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey of her husband.

"Perhaps you had better," he agreed. "This wheel is harder to change than I thought. I'm afraid its going to take a long time. But I can't imagine there is any place around here where we could put up for the night. Still, it will do no harm to look. Hand me that wrench again, Bert, please."

Mrs. Bobbsey and three of the children walked around the turn in the road.

"There it is," said Nan.

She pointed to a lonely cabin set a little way back from the road. It seemed very quiet—deserted, in fact—and as she looked at it Mrs. Bobbsey felt a chill in her heart.

"I don't like the looks of that!" she said. "I'm afraid we could never stay there. No one lives in it, and it's such a lonely place!"

Flossie and Freddie drew closer to their mother while the shadows of night settled down about the lonely cabin.

CHAPTER VII

THE NIGHT CAMP

MR. BOBBSEY knew it was going to be hard work to get the spare wheel on the car and start off again in the darkness to find Midvale. He walked down the road a short distance to where his wife and the children stood. Bert went with him.

"The best thing for us to do," said Mr. Bobbsey, when he reached his wife's side, "will be to stay here all night. It's too risky going on now—the road is too bad, and I can't see very well to change the wheel. We'll stay here!"

"Stay here?" repeated Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Bert and I can sleep in the car," went on her husband. "We have often done it."

"But there isn't room for all of us!"

"You, Nan, and Flossie and Freddie can sleep in that cabin," went on Mr. Bobbsey. "It will be a good shelter and it isn't going to rain, so it won't matter if the roof leaks, and it looks as if it might, the place is so old. We have some car rugs with us, and the night is going to be very warm."

"Do you really mean I should stay in that lonely cabin with Flossie and Freddie and Nan?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Why not?" asked her husband. "We have camped

out in worse places than that, and so have the children."

"I like it!" declared Flossie. "Maybe there's a kitten in the cabin."

"I like it, too," said Freddie, always quick to side with his twin sister. "We'll pretend we're Indians!"

"Let's take a look at the place and see if it's as bad as it appears," suggested Mr. Bobbsey. "Of course if it is too terrible, we'll try to get the spare wheel on and move along."

"Oh, I don't want to give you too much trouble," Mrs. Bobbsey was quick to say. "But at first glance that place looked sort of—well, lonesome. Perhaps it will be all right. Let's go and look," she concluded.

Once they were inside the cabin it was not as bad as it appeared from the outside. True, it was lonesome. The cabin, made of logs, stood by itself in a weed-covered field and there were no other houses within sight.

There was nothing in the place save some broken boxes and some bunks, like low, broad shelves, built against the sides of the smaller of two rooms. There were only two rooms in the place, and no upstairs. In one of the rooms there was a fireplace.

"Would you be afraid to sleep here?" Mr. Bobbsey inquired of his wife. "We could cut some branches from the evergreen trees outside and spread them on the bunks. They would be a sort of spring and mattress together. Then with the car rugs you would have a pretty good bed."

"Yes, I suppose it would be all right," agreed his wife. "We'll stay. It's the only thing we can do," she added, with a look at the gathering darkness

outside. Indeed, night had now come, and but for Mr. Bobbsey having brought a big electric torch in with him from the car they could have seen little in the lonely cabin.

"Well, then, come on, boys!" called their father to Bert and Freddie. "We'll gather evergreen boughs and make the beds."

"I'll help," offered Nan.

"So will I?" chimed in Flossie.

"No, you stay with Mother, dear," suggested Mrs. Bobbsey. "You can help me make a fire. I'll just build a little blaze on the hearth," she told her husband. "It will give us light to see and make it more cheerful."

"There's another torch in the car," he said.

"Better save that," advised his wife. "A little blaze of pieces of the old boxes will do very nicely."

When the blaze was crackling up the chimney, built of field stones, the inside of the lonely cabin was very cheerful. Mr. Bobbsey and Nan and the boys brought in armfuls of the sweet hemlock branches and piled them on the wooden bunks which contained not even a shred of a blanket.

"When are we going to eat?" asked Freddie, when this work had been done.

"Yes, I'm hungry," added Flossie.

"We shall have supper—such as it is—right away," answered Mrs. Bobbsey. "Luckily Dinah put us up a big basket of food."

When a sort of bed had been arranged for Bert and his father in the car, where they would have to lie curled up "like puppies", as Freddie said, and when the rugs had been brought in to spread under Mrs. Bobbsey and the children, who would sleep in

the cabin bunks, then the basket of food was opened.

Not much had been taken out for the midday lunch, and plenty of sandwiches and other good things remained for the evening meal.

They sat on broken boxes about the blaze on the hearth and ate, becoming quite cheerful and gay in spite of having to camp out so unexpectedly.

"Do you think Mr. Watson will worry because we don't get there tonight?" asked Nan of her mother, when the meal was over.

"No; for I didn't say exactly when we would get to Clover Bank," answered Mr. Bobbsey. "I told him when we would start and said we hoped to reach Clover Bank the same evening. But I did not say we would certainly do so."

"It's a good thing you didn't," remarked Mrs. Bobbsey. "We never expected to have to do this. But I rather like it," she went on, with a laugh.

"It's lots of fun," said Freddie.

Flossie said nothing, but from her manner it was easy to see that the little girl was tired and sleepy. Freddie, too, was "fighting the sandman", as his father called it, and so, after making sure that his wife and the three twins would be as comfortable as possible, Mr. Bobbsey and Bert went out to the car to pass the night.

Mrs. Bobbsey had one bunk to herself, Nan took Flossie in with her, and Freddie had the third bunk, thus using all there were in the cabin. At first the little boy wanted to stay with his father and Bert in the car, but his mother had said:

"But what shall we do without a man to look after us in the cabin?"

"Oh, I'll stay with you!" Freddie had quickly replied. "You needn't be afraid of anything when I'm here. I'll get a big stick and keep it by my bunk, and if I hear a noise in the night I'll get up and hit it!"

"Do you mean you'll hit the noise?" asked Bert, with a laugh.

"I'll hit the thing that makes the noise!" declared Freddie.

So the Bobbsey twins had made a night camp, and, once the first idea of loneliness was gone, it was not bad at all, Mrs. Bobbsey declared.

The small children were soon asleep, and Nan was not long in following them to Dreamland. Mrs. Bobbsey, however, could not so easily drop off to slumber, and Mr. Bobbsey did not find the car as comfortable as he had hoped.

Bert, however, was a healthy boy. He had often camped out, and could curl up almost anywhere and go to sleep. So he, too, was soon slumbering peacefully.

Just what it was that awakened Freddie the little fellow afterwards said he did not know. But several hours after having gone to bed on the hemlock boughs something caused him to open his eyes with a start. At first he could not remember where he was, it was so different from awakening in his comfortable bed at home. But when he saw a faint glow of the fire on the cabin hearth, then he remembered.

"Oh, we're camping out on the way to Clover Bank," whispered Freddie to himself. In the other bunks he could hear the gentle breathing of his mother and sisters. Then came again the noise that had startled the little boy into wakefulness.

It was a noise as if someone were moving something in the darkness—moving something there in the cabin. It was not Freddie's mother or Nan or Flossie, for they were lying in their bunks. The little boy could see them by the faint glow of the embers.

Then came the rattle of wood, as if one of the broken boxes was being dragged over the floor.

"Oh, I guess it's Daddy come in to put more wood on the fire," thought Freddie, with a sigh of relief. "Is that you, Daddy?" he asked in a loud whisper.

There was no answer, but the noise ceased. And Freddie knew that if it had been his father preparing to put more wood on the fire, he would not have stopped because Freddie spoke.

"No, it can't be Daddy!" thought the little fellow.

Then he heard the noise again, louder than before. A piece of box was being dragged across the floor, and Freddie could hear the scraping of feet—feet like those of an animal.

Freddie was a small boy, but he knew enough to be sure it could be no large or dangerous animal like a bear or a wolf. No such animals were left in the woods so near towns and villages. But it was *something*, and what it was Freddie felt he must find out.

"I'll throw my club on the fire," he told himself. "That will blaze up and I can see what it is."

True to his promise, the little boy had placed a piece of dry wood—part of a box—near his bunk when he went to bed. This stick was to "hit a noise", as Bert laughingly said. Freddie now reached down, felt on the floor until he found this wood, and then he slipped off the bunk and started towards the glowing fireplace.

But he had not taken more than three steps when he stumbled over something and fell down with a crash which awakened his mother, who cried:

"What is it? Who is there? What has happened?"

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORM

SILENCE followed the noise of Freddie's fall and his mother's questions. But it was silence for only a moment. The commotion awakened Flossie, who caught hold of Nan, with whom she was sleeping, and called out:

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know, dear," Nan answered quietly, for she did not want Flossie to be frightened. Indeed, Nan, as yet, knew nothing about which to be alarmed. True, there had been a noise, but that often happened at night, even at home.

Mr. Bobbsey, out in the car with Bert, also heard the sounds in the cabin, his wife's voice having awakened him.

"I'm coming!" he cried, jumping out of the car. None of the campers had taken off their clothes.

"So am I!" added Bert, as he followed his father.

By this time Freddie had "picked himself up", as he said afterwards, and discovered that he had stumbled over a broken box in the middle of the cabin floor. The little fellow was not hurt.

Also by this time Mrs. Bobbsey had reached for and turned on the torch her husband had left with her, so that she could see what had caused the commotion.

What she saw was Freddie standing with his "club" in his hand, ready to cast it on the embers, so there would be blaze enough to see what had caused the noise. But the gleam of the electric torch made Freddie's brand unnecessary now.

"What is it, Freddie?" asked his mother. "Did you fall out of bed?"

"No, Mother, I didn't fall out of bed," answered the little lad. "I got out to make the fire brighter so I could see."

"See what?" asked his father who by this time had come into the log cabin, followed by Bert. "What did you want to see, little fireman? Tell me!"

"Little fireman" was a good name for Freddie in this case, as he was about to start the fire blazing again.

"I wanted to see the noise," stated Flossie's brother.

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Bert. "You can't *see* a noise."

"Well, I wanted to see what made it," went on Freddie. "I heard a noise and it woke me up."

"Did the noise wake you, too, Mother?" asked Nan.

"Well, some noise did, but I think it was Freddie falling out of bed that I heard," answered Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I didn't fall out of bed!" insisted Freddie. "I got out all right, and then, in the dark, I fell over one of these old boxes. It was a noise like one of these broken boxes being dragged over the floor that I heard. There it goes again!" he cried, pointing to a dark corner of the cabin. "Listen!"

Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey each held a torch now, but the beams were turned away from the corner towards which Freddie pointed so that it was quite dark

over there. Truly enough, a noise had come from there.

Quickly Mr. Bobbsey pointed his light in that direction and an instant later there was a scurrying of feet and a rattle of wood.

"Look! It's a dog!" cried Freddie.

"Or maybe a skunk!" shouted Bert. "Better be careful!"

"No, that wasn't a skunk," said his father. "It was a dog, and he seemed to be dragging that broken box, which would have made the noise which Freddie heard."

The dog had quickly run out, and when Mr. Bobbsey went over to the corner, where it seemed to have been hiding during the excitement, the reason for it all was explained.

Caught in one corner of the broken box was a bone with some meat on it. Perhaps the dog himself had put the bone there during the day and had come back in the night to get it. But the bone had become wedged fast and in pulling on it the dog moved the box over the floor.

"And that's what made the noise that awakened Freddie," said Mr. Bobbsey, when he had finished looking in the corner. "The dog came back here to get the midnight lunch he had hidden, for it is midnight and past," Mr. Bobbsey went on, looking at his watch.

"Well, I'm glad it was only a dog," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "He may come back and disturb us again, for the door is so broken that it cannot be tightly shut," she added.

"But I can toss the dog's bone outside so he will

not need to come in after it," said Mr. Bobbsey. "That will keep him outside. And since there is a dog around here I believe we aren't as far from a house where people live as I thought at first. There may be a settlement just over the hill. We'll find out in the morning. Now we can all go back to sleep."

This they did, and nothing more disturbed them until the sun was shining in the morning, when it was time to get up.

Mr. Bobbsey's guess about people living just over the hill was correct. He and Bert, walking to the top of the hill and looking about, saw several houses not more than half a mile from the lonely cabin. At one of these houses Mr. Bobbsey arranged for his family to have breakfast.

"Have you got a dog?" asked Freddie of the farmer, whose wife had agreed to set a morning meal for the travellers.

"Yes, we have a dog," was the answer. "At least, he stays here some of the time, but mostly he roams around at night. There he is now—been out all night, as usual," and with a laugh the man pointed to a small black-and-white dog that came into the yard wagging its tail in a friendly fashion.

"That's the dog that made a noise in the night when I fell over the box!" declared Freddie, and Bert said it was the same animal that had come into the cabin after the bone.

"It would be just like Major," chuckled the farmer. "So you stayed all night in the old cabin, did you?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Bobbsey, as she sipped the hot comforting coffee the farmer's wife set before them. "Did anybody ever live there?"

"A queer, solitary sort of fellow—a farm hand," answered the farmer. "But that was some time ago. It's too bad you folks didn't come on just a bit farther and you could have spent the night here."

"We couldn't get any farther with a flat tyre," said Mr. Bobbsey. "Besides, from the lonely look of that cabin it didn't seem as if there was another house within ten miles."

"Yes, it is lonesome back there by the cabin," agreed the farmer. "But that fellow liked it lonesome, he said. Do you want me to hitch up and haul your car here?" he asked.

"Oh, no, thank you," replied Mr. Bobbsey. "Now that it is daylight and I can see what I'm doing, it will be easy enough to change the wheel. Then we can go on to Midvale and then to Hitchville. This road will take us to Midvale, will it not?"

"It will if you keep on going long enough," the farmer said. "But you missed the best and shortest way. However, there's no help for it now. I hope you don't have any more bad luck."

"Thanks," said Mr. Bobbsey.

The twins, as usual, finished their meal before their father and mother were ready to leave the table, and, being excused, they ran out to see and make friends with Major, the dog, who was ready enough to play with them. There were other farm animals, also, to be admired. A little lamb, its mother dead, was being brought up on a baby's feeding-bottle by one of the farm boys. The little "cosset", as a lamb of this kind is called, was so "dear and sweet" that the children begged their father to buy it for them.

"I think you'll find something just as good at

Clover Bank," he said, with a laugh. "Anyhow, we haven't any room for it in the car."

"And I doubt if my Ned would sell it at any price," said the farmer. "He sets quite a store by that cosset."

So the Bobbsey twins had to leave without it, and probably it was just as well, since the car was quite filled as it was.

The sunshine gave plenty of light for Mr. Bobbsey to see to change the wheel, and in a little while the travellers were riding along again after the night of adventure.

Midvale proved to be a pleasant little village. Here a stop was made to get some petrol and oil, and then once more the Bobbseys were on their way.

The road to Hitchville was a main one, well travelled and with signs up in many places, so there was no more danger of Mr. Bobbsey taking the wrong turning. The children began anticipating their arrival, and were talking about what they would do when they reached Clover Bank, which they hoped to do by early afternoon.

But when Nan saw her mother and father now and then turning to look up at the sky, the Bobbsey girl thought something might be amiss, so she asked about it.

"I think we are going to have a storm," her father replied. "I don't like the look of those clouds."

On and on they journeyed, going a bit faster now that the storm seemed to be approaching more rapidly. Fortunately the road was a good one. As they went down a little hill towards a white bridge, they saw a boy on it jumping up and down, seemingly much

excited. He was shouting something and pointing down towards the water.

"Somebody may have fallen in!" cried Mrs. Bobbsey. "Stop the car, Dick, and find out!"

"I will!" was the answer, and the car came to a halt on the bridge, close to the jumping, excited, shouting boy.

"What's the matter?" called Mr. Bobbsey, hurrying from his seat behind the wheel. "Is somebody in the water?"

"Yes! Yes! There she is! She can't swim, either!" cried the boy. "Oh, get her out!"

"Is it your sister?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, as she put aside suitcases and bundles to enable her to get out.

The boy did not answer, but kept shouting and jumping around, meanwhile pointing to the water. Mr. Bobbsey looked over the railing of the bridge, but when he saw no child in the stream, which at this point was wide and deep, he turned to the boy and said:

"What's the matter with you? There's no one in there!"

"Yes, there is!" cried the lad. "It's my cat! She followed me down the road and when a car ran close to her on the bridge she tried to climb up on the rail and she fell in! Oh, please get her out before she drowns!"

Mr. Bobbsey looked again, and sure enough saw a cat trying to swim to shore. But cats aren't like dogs. Their fur gets so wet when they are in the water that it is hard for them to get out again. Bert was going to ask why the boy himself didn't get his

own cat out, but when the Bobbsey lad saw how small the other lad was, he held back the question. Instead Bert cried:

"I'll get her for you!" He ran down off the road towards the edge of the river.

"Be careful!" warned his mother. "You may fall in or get stuck in the mud!"

But Bert was taking no chances. He picked up a piece of tree branch and, leaning over the edge of the stream, while he held to a bush, he reached the branch out and pulled the poor cat to shore. With pitiful mewings and looking very wet and miserable, the pussy crawled out.

"Oh, thanks!" cried the boy.

"You're welcome," answered Bert, with a laugh.

The boy ran down and picked up the cat, all dripping wet as it was, in his arms. Evidently he loved animals, and if he had not been so excited he himself might have rescued his pet as Bert had done.

"I thought a child had fallen in," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"So did I," agreed her husband. "But if we don't hurry along we may all be as wet as that kitten. It's going to rain hard soon. And with this wind it will be a driving rain, so the top on the car won't be much protection. It's too much work to get up the side curtains. We'd better run for shelter."

Leaving the boy with his wet cat calling out renewed thanks to Bert, the Bobbsey family started off once more. Now the sky was torn with jagged flashes of lightning, followed by low mutterings of thunder which seemed to come nearer and nearer.

"I think this is Hitchville," said Mr. Bobbsey, as

they turned off a country road into a town. Very soon several signs told them that this guess was correct.

By this time the wind was blowing hard, the lightning was more vivid, and the thunder louder.

"Hadn't we better run into some garage here?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey of her husband, as they passed along the main street of Hitchville.

"Wait until I find out how far it is to Clover Bank Farm," he suggested. "We may be able to get there before the storm breaks if it isn't too far."

He stopped to make inquiries of a policeman where the two main streets of Hitchville crossed, and the constable said Mr. Watson's place was about two miles out, on the main road.

"We can make it!" decided Mr. Bobbsey. "It won't rain for ten minutes yet and we'll be there before then."

But they had no sooner got beyond the town than the first drops began splashing down, to the accompaniment of loud thunder and such glaring lightning as to make Flossie hide her head in the rugs.

"It's going to pour in another minute!" cried Mrs. Bobbsey. "I wish we had stayed in Hitchville!"

"Yes, it would have been better," agreed her husband. They were on the main road now, but there was no shelter in sight until, as they made a turn, they saw just ahead of them a farmhouse and a large barn up a lane and near the road. The wide doors of the barn were open, and as there came a sudden burst of rain and a great crash of thunder, Mrs. Bobbsey suggested:

"Drive into that barn, Dick. Then we'll be sheltered. Don't try to go on to Clover Bank."

"All right," he replied, speaking loudly to be heard above the noise of the storm. "I think that's the best thing to do!"

He swung the car off the road, into the lane, and up the sloping drive right into the open barn, much to the surprise of two men who were inside, having evidently gone there for shelter.

A moment later it seemed as if the sky were torn open to let down the rain which dashed around the barn in a fury, whipped by the high wind, while the lightning flashed and the thunder rumbled.

CHAPTER IX

AT CLOVER BANK

"THANK goodness, we're in a dry place!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey with a sigh of relief, as the car came to a stop within the shelter of the big barn.

"It doesn't rain in here, does it?" asked Freddie.

"Of course it doesn't," declared Nan, with a laugh.

"It rains on the roof of the barn. I can hear it!" said Flossie.

The children, who had been a bit cramped by the long car ride and somewhat wet by the dashing rain, now prepared to get out of the car. They wanted to watch the storm from the safe shelter of the farm building.

The two men, who had, it seemed, also taken shelter there from the downpour, had been looking curiously at the Bobbsey family. Seeing this, Mr. Bobbsey smiled and said:

"I hope the owner of this barn won't mind my driving in like this."

"Oh, no, the owner won't mind a bit," answered one of the men, with a laugh. "You're perfectly welcome."

"Do you happen to know the owner?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Well, yes, I might say I do," went on the man who had first spoken. "I know him quite well."

"I didn't know you kept bees, Mr. Watson," said Nan, when quiet was once more restored in the barn.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I bought some from a man who didn't make much of a success producing honey for the market. I left the bees over where he had them—that's the reason you've never seen the hives around here."

"Will there be some honey soon?" asked Freddie.

"I shouldn't wonder but what there will," was the answer. "Anyhow, there will be plenty in the autumn, and I'll see that you get some to eat on your pancakes this winter. I'll send you some."

"I like pancakes!" murmured Freddie.

Knowing that too much work would not please the children, Mr. Bobbsey suggested that they had been in the barn long enough, sorting peaches, and told them to run out and play.

This Flossie and Freddie did, going to their favourite place down by the shallow part of the brook, where they sailed tiny boats. Bert and Nan, after having really helped quite a bit in sorting the fruit, wandered off to the woods, Nan taking a story book.

Bert decided he would go fishing.

"Want to come, Nan?" he invited, for he liked to have his sister with him.

"Thank you, I don't think I do," she answered. "I'll take my book back to the house and read in the hammock."

Bert went back to the house with her to get his rod and line. When they arrived they saw Mrs. Martin excitedly walking about the porch, looking on window-sills, under chairs, and in many places.

"What's the matter?" asked Nan.

"Is the baby lost?" Bert wanted to know.

"Not the baby, but my glasses!" answered the old lady. "Oh, dear! I had them just before the runaway cattle appeared, and I must have taken them off and laid them some place. Now I can't find them! And I'm so used to them I don't know what to do without them! Oh, where are my glasses?" and she seemed much distressed over the loss.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE QUEER CLOUD

"WE'LL help you look for your glasses, Mrs. Martin," offered Nan, though she wished very much to finish her story. "Won't we, Bert?"

"Sure we will," he answered, boy-fashion. And though he very much wanted to go fishing, he gave up his pleasure for the time being to help the old lady.

Mrs. Martin was really quite upset about losing her glasses, as most people are whose eyes are so poor that they cannot see well nor read without the help of spectacles.

"Where did you have them last?" asked Nan, as she had often heard her mother ask when one of the children lost a toy.

"I had them on my head, over my nose, and in front of my eyes," Mrs. Martin answered. "Then, all of a sudden, I heard Mrs. Watson cry out about the cattle coming into the garden, and I grabbed off my glasses to get the broom. I was afraid I'd break them chasing after the cows."

By this time Mrs. Watson, who had been putting the baby to sleep, came out on the side porch.

"Yes, I saw your glasses on you just before the cattle began running wild," said Jenny's mother.

"Then so much happened all at once that I don't know what you did with them."

"Maybe they're still up on top of your head," suggested Bert. "Once Charlie Mason's grandmother lost her glasses and we looked all over for them, and all the while she had them pushed up on top of her head."

"Well, mine aren't there," Mrs. Martin replied, putting up her hand, however, to feel and make sure. "I don't see what I did with them!"

Then the search began, with the older Bobbsey twins and Mrs. Watson helping. The porch was searched carefully, and the children looked on the ground around it, stepping carefully so they would not tread on and break the glasses if they should have happened to fall. But the glasses could not be found.

Then Mrs. Bobbsey came and helped, but she was no more successful than the others had been. Inside and outside the house the search went on, but the spectacles could not be found.

"Maybe they'll turn up after a while," said Mr. Watson, when he came in from the peach-sorting to get washed for dinner.

"Well, I hope they will," his wife's cousin said. "Meanwhile, I can't read a word, and I can't see very well. I declare, I can hardly tell one Bobbsey twin from the other!" she said with a sigh.

"We can tell you our names," Freddie suggested. He and Flossie had come back from sailing their toy boats and had taken part in the hunt for the glasses.

"Yes, my dear, that's kind of you, and I suppose

you could do that," murmured the old lady. "But I would like to see."

When a further search did not bring the missing glasses to light, Mr. Watson said:

"Can't you post the prescription to the people who made them and have another pair made?"

"Yes, I could do that if I had the prescription," agreed Mrs. Martin. "But I haven't got that paper. I lost it. If I only had it things wouldn't be so bad, for it would mean only a few days before I could order new spectacles by post. But I've lost the prescription."

"Your eye specialist has a copy," Mr. Watson said. "They always keep copies of the prescriptions they give their patients."

"Probably Dr. Bangert has a copy of mine," Mrs. Martin agreed, with a sigh. "But he has gone away on his summer holiday and I don't know where to reach him. When he gave me the prescription he told me to take good care of it, as he was going away and could not be reached until the autumn. I think he has gone hunting in the wilds of Canada."

"Then it looks as if you will either have to go to another eye specialist around here and get him to fit you with glasses," said Mr. Watson, "or else find those that are lost."

"I don't want to go to another specialist," said Mrs. Martin. "I don't believe anybody but Dr. Bangert could test my eyes. Oh, I must find those glasses! They can't be far away."

"Maybe they got caught on one of the horns of the cows and carried off," suggested Freddie.

"You think of the funniest things!" laughed Mrs.

Watson. "But the cows didn't come near enough to the porch to take my cousin's glasses. She must have dropped them in some out-of-the-way corner."

Though once again they searched all over, even in places where Mrs. Martin said she had never been with her glasses, the spectacles could not be found and she was quite in despair.

Having done all he could to help the old lady, Bert decided that he would spend the afternoon fishing, for he was fond of this sport and Mr. Watson had said that in a creek across the meadow from the brook there were good fish to be had.

He had brought his fishing outfit with him, so that all he needed now was some bait, and on the advice of Zeek he took both worms and grasshoppers. The worms he and his brother and Nan dug in the garden, putting the crawling creatures in a baking-powder tin, with some earth. To give the worms air Bert punched holes in the top and bottom of the tin box.

"Sometimes when the fish won't bite on worms they will on grasshoppers," suggested the hired man. "Just take another box with you and walk through the lower hay meadow. The grasshoppers are thick there. You can catch them in your hand as you walk along and pop them in the box. But you want to be careful how you do it."

"Why, will grasshoppers bite?" asked Bert, though he had never heard of them doing that.

"No," answered the hired man, with a laugh. "But after you catch one grasshopper and put it in the box, when you take off the cover to put in another, often the first one will jump out. And you can't catch many fish on one 'hopper."

"Oh, I see what you mean," laughed Bert.

He found it just as Zeek had said. It was easy enough to grab a green grasshopper off a head of timothy grass in the hayfield, but when he caught his second one and opened the box cover to slip the creature in, out jumped the first one.

But Bert made a prisoner of the second one, and when he had his third he was more careful in opening the box. He raised the lid only a little way, and through the crack he shoved the green insect. Soon he had enough, he thought, with the worms he had brought, and he made his way to the edge of the creek, picking out a spot where the water foamed and bubbled over the stony bottom.

As worms were easier to put on the hook than the grasshoppers, which were very lively, Bert baited with one of the crawling creatures and cast in his hook. The Bobbsey boy was about as patient as most lads, but when he had pulled out several times, thinking he had bites, and found nothing on his hook, Bert began to think perhaps it would be well to change the bait.

He opened his other box to get one of the grasshoppers, but no sooner was the lid raised than, with one accord, every grasshopper in the container leaped out and sailed away.

"Well—say—that wasn't very polite!" laughed Bert. "Still, I can't blame you!" he went on. "I reckon it isn't much fun to be stuck on a hook and swallowed by a fish. I'll catch my grasshoppers right here, one at a time, as I need them," he said.

He had noticed that in the field just at the back of the place he had picked out for fishing, many

grasshoppers were jumping from weed to weed. Bert laid aside his rod, having noted that the worm had been nearly nibbled off the hook now by small fish, too little to land, and, going back, he caught a grasshopper in his hand.

"Now for a big fish!" said the lad.

But after waiting some time and getting no bites, Bert was inclined to think that he had chosen a wrong spot or else that his bait or the day was wrong. His first guess was borne out a little later when a voice hailed him, saying:

"You'll never get any fish there!"

Bert Bobbsey turned and saw a country lad of about his own age standing on the edge of the weed-grown field. The boy was bare-footed, his clothes were ragged, and he had a torn straw hat on his head. Over his shoulder was a crooked stick cut from a tree, and fastened to it was a line with many knots to it, as if it had been broken and tied a number of times.

"Why won't I get any fish here?" asked Bert.

" 'Cause there aren't any there—it's too shallow. If you want to get big ones you'll have to go up above to the eddy, where the water's deep."

"Well, I must say I haven't had much luck here," admitted Bert. "I've tried worms and grasshoppers, and the only bites are little nibbles."

"Those are just baby fish. They suck off the bait without getting caught on the hook," said the country lad. "Come on with me if you want to, and I'll show you a good place."

"Thanks," answered Bert. "Do you live around here?"

"Yes, just over the hill. My name's Sam Porter. What's yours?"

"Bert Bobbsey," was the answer.

"You live around here?" asked Sam. "I never saw you before that I know of."

"No, I don't live here," Bert said. "I'm visiting at Clover Bank."

"Oh, yes, I know Mr. Watson!" exclaimed Sam. "My father works for him. He's picking peaches now."

Sam proved to be a nice lad, and he and Bert soon became good friends, talking about fishing and other outdoor sports. Sam led the way up the bank of the creek to a quiet, shady spot beneath some overhanging willow trees.

"There's the eddy," he said, pointing to where the water ran deep and quiet. The stream had washed out a place in the earth bank, making a deep pool where the water swirled around in a circle, or "eddy", as the country lad called it. On the other side of the creek, opposite this point, the stream was shallow and ran rapidly over the stones.

"But the big fish come to this pool," Sam said. "You'll soon have a big one!"

He was right. Bert had only thrown his worm-baited hook in the water and waited a few minutes before the float on his line dipped suddenly under water.

"You've got him!. A big one!" whispered Sam. "Pull up!"

Neither Sam nor Bert were doing fishing in a scientific way with a reel, and the only way to land

a fish, once he was hooked, was to pull up the rod quickly.

This Bert Bobbsey did. He felt a weight on his bamboo rod, and as it went in a sweeping circle over his head he had a glimpse of something flashing like silver in the sun.

"You got him! A beauty!" yelled Sam. "A big one!"

When Bert ran to look in the grass, where he had landed his catch, he was delighted to find that he had caught a good-sized chub, as Sam named the fish.

"Say, you brought me to a good place all right!" cried Bert in delight to his companion. "There's fish here all right! I hope you get one!"

"Oh, I'll get one all right," said Sam. "I hardly ever come here without getting as many as we can use at home. My mother likes fish, and about twice a week I come here to get some."

He had retained his seat on the bank, his line dangling in the water, while Bert landed his catch, and he watched the Bobbsey boy as he took the chub off the hook—which was not easy to do, since the fish had swallowed the hook in its eagerness to get the bait. When Bert had his prize loose, he strung a string through the gills and then, fastening the fish on a cross-stick so it would not slip off, he put it back in a little pool, tying the shore end of the string to a tree.

The chub feebly flapped its tail and tried to swim away, but he was held a prisoner. In the water he would be kept fresh until Bert was ready to go home with any others he might land.

Sam caught the next one, tossing back on the grass a fish not quite as big as Bert's, but fair in size.

"Now my luck's beginning!" exclaimed Sam, as he fastened his fish to another string and let it swim about in a pool. His fish had only been hooked through the lip and was hardly hurt at all.

The two lads then "took turns", so to speak, in landing fish. It was a fine day and a good place, and first Bert would land one and then Sam would follow.

"Well, I think I have enough," Bert said, after a while.

"And I have, too," agreed Sam. "We might as well clean 'em and wash 'em here and then there won't be such a mess around the house."

The boys prepared the fish for cooking and then put them with wet grass in baskets they had brought for that purpose.

"If you come with me across this field, I'll show you a short cut back to Clover Bank," suggested Sam, when they were ready to go.

"All right."

The two boys were going across a green meadow in a little valley between two low hills when Bert suddenly heard a low, humming sound in the air. At first he thought it was a distant aeroplane, but on looking around he saw what seemed to be a small black cloud coming towards him and Sam.

"Look!" cried Bert, pointing.

"Golly! We'd better duck!" exclaimed Sam.

He dropped his rod and basket of fish and began running towards a low clump of bushes, calling to Bert as he ran:

"Come on! Come on in here until it gets past!"

CHAPTER XIX

HIVING THE BEES

BERT BOBBSEY did not understand what Sam Porter's excitement was all about. But he could tell by the way Sam acted and by the way he called that it was something serious. So he dropped his fish and his rod and made ready to follow his new chum.

"Come on! Come on!" called Sam, peering out from his shelter in the bushes, as he saw that Bert was not hurrying as much as he might. "Run for it, if you don't want to get stung!"

"Stung!" exclaimed Bert.

"Yep," answered the country lad. "Don't you see? That's a swarm of bees with the queen bee in the middle, and they're looking for a place to settle so they can start a new home. I only hope they don't 'light on this bush," he added, as Bert crawled in the shelter with him. "If they do—oh boy! Look out for yourself! The best thing to do will be to leg it for the creek and jump in. Just let your nose stick out—that's all! I hope they don't decide to settle here where we are!"

But the swarm of humming, busy little insects, following their queen, suddenly turned and made for a tree not far away. There the bees clustered in a bunch on one of the low branches.

"That's good!" cried Sam. "Mr. Watson can easily get them from there. Come on, we'll go and tell him!"

The boys picked up their fish and their rods, and soon they were at Clover Bank.

"Oh, what a fine lot of fish!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey as she saw the two boys with their catch.

"Yes, they're good fish," Bert said. "But will you take them, please, Nan. I have to go with Sam and tell Mr. Watson about his swarm of bees."

"What's this about the bees?" Mrs. Bobbsey wanted to know. The boys, taking turns, quickly told her, and Bert added·

"I'm going to watch Mr. Watson catch them."

"Oh, so am I!" cried Freddie.

Nan hurried back to the farm-house with the two baskets of fish, which were to be put in the cool cellar until needed. Sam said he would come back and get his after the bees were caught.

"So some of my bees got away, did they?" asked Mr. Watson when he had been told the news. He was about to set out for another of his orchards where peaches were being picked, but when he heard about his honey-makers he decided to postpone his orchard trip.

Followed by the Bobbsey twins, their mother, and Sam, Mr. Watson hurried to the little valley where he kept about a hundred hives of bees. Like little dog-kennels the hives were, only with flat instead of sloping roofs, and of course only a small slit was needed in the bottom of each bee-hive to let the bees fly in and out. The hives stood in rows in an orchard of apple trees near a small garden. There

was a farm-house in this valley in which lived a man and his wife who looked after the bees.

"I had three swarms out today," called Jason Stern, the beekeeper, to Mr. Watson when the latter arrived. "I couldn't get them all. One got away."

"I know where it is," the peach-grower answered. "Bert and Sam saw the swarm alight when they were coming back from fishing. I'll take an empty hive on the small hand-cart and bring them back. You'd better come along to help—that is, if you have the other swarms safe."

"Yes, they're all right except the one that got away," said Mr. Stern.

While the Bobbsey twins watched, Mr. Watson and the beekeeper put rubber gloves on their hands and on their heads big straw hats, the brim of which held the mosquito netting veil away from their faces so no bee could get near them. They also tied down the legs of their trousers.

"For sometimes a bee or two will crawl up your pants, and it isn't very pleasant," said Jason Stern, with a laugh.

Then a two-wheeled cart with a flat wooden platform was brought out of the barn, and the party set off.

They presently came in view of the tree on which the swarm had alighted. The cluster of bees was like a big football, and somewhat similar in shape. A low buzzing sound could be heard.

"Better not come any closer with the children," advised the farmer to Mrs. Bobbsey. "A stray bee or two might sting them. You can watch Jason and me from here."

The mother of the twins, and in fact the twins themselves, as well as Sam, did not care to go too near. So they sat down on a grassy hillock while the two men wheeled the cart close under the tree. On the cart was an empty bee-hive, one of many kept ready for just such occasions as this. Also, Mr. Stern had brought with him a "smoker", which was something like a tin funnel with a little leather bellows beneath it. When this bellows was pumped, clouds of smoke were sent out of the small end of the funnel. Directed against the swarm of bees, the smoke quietened them so they would not sting those who handled them.

The cart, with the open empty hive on it, was wheeled up until it was directly under the branch on which hung the clustering bees around their queen.

"You hold the cart steady now, Jason," directed Mr. Watson, "and I'll climb up in the tree and jar them off. As soon as most of them are inside the hive, clap the cover on."

"All right," was the answer.

"I wonder what would happen," said Bert, "if the cluster of bees and their queen should fall on Mr. Stern's head instead of in the empty hive."

"It wouldn't be very pleasant," his mother answered. "Though I suppose, with the veils, the men wouldn't get stung. But watch now, children, and see them hive the runaway bees."

"Jason, are you all ready down there?" called Mr. Watson to his bee-man, when the farmer himself was up in the tree.

"All ready," was the answer. "Shake 'em down!"

CHAPTER XX

THE PIRATE'S CAVE

WHILE the Bobbsey twins and Sam, standing near Mrs. Bobbsey, watched, the peach-grower suddenly jarred the branch on which had gathered the runaway bees, clustered about their queen like faithful subjects. Down dropped the buzzing brown mass of honey-gatherers into the open hive-box.

"You got most of 'em!" shouted Jason Stern, as, with a quick motion, he clapped the cover on the hive and started drawing the cart away.

"Won't the bees get out the little front door?" asked Flossie, for she had noticed that the hive-box had a slit at the bottom.

"I stopped that up before I put the hive on the cart," said Mr. Stern. "The bees are safely caged now—that is all but a few that got away."

The children could see a few of the insects, which had not fallen into the hive, flying around the tree and around the white box that now contained the queen and thousands of workers. Perhaps these stray bees were wondering where their monarch had disappeared to.

"Don't wheel your cart over towards the children," warned Mr. Watson, as he climbed down out of the tree. "Some of the stray bees may sting them."

"I'll be careful," said the bee-man. He puffed into the air around the hive some smoke from the smoker, and this served to drive away the humming bees that, after circling about for a while, flew off in the direction of the orchard.

"They'll go back to the old hive," Mr. Watson said, as he took off his veil and gloves, for there was no longer need of them. "And the bees and the queen in this new hive will start making the wax cells into which they will put honey a little later. I'm glad you saw this swarm and came to tell me, boys," he said to Sam and Bert. "It's worth quite a few dollars, or will be this autumn when the hive is filled with honey."

"I like honey," remarked Freddie, looking carefully at Mr. Watson to make sure no bees had followed him. But none had.

"Well, I'll send you some when you get back home," promised the peach-grower.

"That was very interesting," said Mrs. Bobbsey as she turned to take the path across the fields to Clover Bank. "Bees are very smart little creatures."

"And they'll make you smart if they sting you!" said Bert.

"Oh, that's a good joke!" exclaimed Nan, with a laugh. "I'm going to put that in my composition."

"You can put in about your brother catching a big fish, too," said Sam. "He got the biggest one of the lot."

"Oh, did you?" cried Nan. "I'm glad of that. And I can write about it. Oh, I do hope I win that prize!" she went on.

"I hate to write compositions," declared Sam to Bert. "Don't you?"

"I sure do," was the answer. "I'd rather go fishing any day!"

From a safe distance, when they had gone back to the little bee-farm, the children watched the hive of runaways and their captive queen set down amid the rows of other busy insects. The piece of wood that had blocked the "front door" was taken away and soon the members of the new colony of honey-gatherers were flying out and in.

Then Mr. Stern brought out some honey, from the crop of the previous season, and gave the Bobbsey twins and Sam a treat.

"Lots has happened today," remarked Bert, when Sam had gone home after getting his basket of fish from the cellar and the children were sitting on the porch of the farm-house, waiting for the evening meal, which was almost ready.

"I'm glad of it," announced Nan, who was writing with a big old geography book on her knees. "I'm making a list of the different things," she went on, "and I'm going to put the best of them in my composition. Tell me how you felt, Bert, when you pulled out the big fish.'

"Oh, I felt fine!" he answered, with a laugh.

"I wish I could catch a fish," sighed Freddie. "I'm kind of tired of playing with my fire-engine."

"I'll take you fishing tomorrow," promised Bert. "I know a fine place now. Sam showed me."

"I wouldn't go tomorrow," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Why not?" Bert wanted to know.

"Because that's the day Daddy promised to take you to the woods for a picnic."

"Oh, so it is!" cried Bert. "I forgot about that. We'll go fishing some other time, Freddie."

"All right," agreed the little boy. "Picnics are just as nice as fish."

"Nicer, I think," Flossie said. " 'Cause you can eat at picnics you can't eat fish!"

"Sure you can eat fish!" exclaimed Bert. "What did I catch 'em for if they aren't to be eaten?"

"Well, I don't like to eat fish," Flossie went on; "so I'd rather have a picnic."

"We'll go tomorrow," promised her mother.

Mrs. Martin came out on the porch, looking from side to side anxiously.

"Have you found your glasses yet?" asked Nan.

"No, dearie, I haven't," was the answer. "And I feel quite lost without them. I can't read a word. You children haven't seen them anywhere, have you?"

None of the Bobbseys had, though, led by Nan, Flossie and Freddie made another search about the house and the side porch. But the old lady's glasses seemed to have vanished completely, and she did not know what to do about getting another pair.

"I suppose I'll just have to wait until my eye specialist comes back in the autumn," she said with a sigh.

The next day proved to be a bright and sunshiny one—just the best kind for a picnic.

Mrs. Watson decided to take Baby Jenny with them on the outing, and soon after breakfast she and the little one joined the Bobbsey family in Mr. Bobbsey's car. They were to go to a glen about ten miles away, there to spend the day. In the glen, or little valley between two high, rocky places, was a waterfall, much

larger than the one in the brook where Bert had placed his wooden mill.

"I wish I had made a bigger water-wheel so I could fasten it under the big waterfall we are going to see," said Bert, when they were almost ready to start.

"It would have to be a big one, for there is quite a fall in Buttermilk Glen," Mrs. Watson said, with a laugh.

"Why do they call it that?" asked Nan.

"Because someone thought the water falling over the ledge of rocks looked like buttermilk, I suppose," was the answer. "Do you want to go to Nan?" the mother asked Baby Jenny, who was holding out her hands towards Bert's twin sister. "Well, I think you may." So, to her delight, Nan was allowed to hold the baby during part of the ride to Buttermilk Glen.

Baskets of food had been packed, for the picnic was to last all day and they would eat in the woods, the prospect of which gave the twins joy and delight.

"We'll have more peaches picked ready for you to sort when you get back," Mr. Watson called to the picnic party as they drove away. "I never had such a big crop."

"We'll help you tomorrow," promised Bert.

Buttermilk Glen was soon reached. It was a picnic ground well known for miles around, though when those from Clover Bank arrived they had the place to themselves.

"I hear the waterfall!" cried Freddie as soon as they alighted from the car at the entrance to the glen. The road was too rough to drive all the way up into the place.

"Yes, that's it," said Mrs. Watson. "It's very pretty when the water is high; and in winter, when it freezes, it is even more beautiful. But I know someone who is sleepy!" she went on in a singing voice.

"I'm not!" quickly cried Flossie. "I didn't come here to sleep."

"She means Jenny," whispered Nan, and, sure enough, the little one's head was nodding and her eyes were closing. Her mother wrapped Jenny in a blanket and put her down under a tree, while Mr. Bobbsey got out the lunch baskets and the Bobbsey twins scattered here and there to play.

"You may have fun for about two hours, and then we'll eat," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "After lunch you may play about some more before we start for home."

With shouts of delight the boys and girls began exploring the picnic ground. They had never been there before, and there was much to see and admire.

"We'll climb up the sides and get to the top of the waterfall after lunch," Bert decided. "Maybe I can fish up there. It's a big fall—too big for my little water-wheel in the brook. But maybe I could make a big wheel that would turn here."

A path led up one side of the cliff a little distance below the fall, and up this, Mrs. Watson said, the children could make their way to the top of the fall.

But there was plenty to see down below, and what with exploring, finding pretty stones, and wading barefooted in little pools, the four had lots of fun.

After a time Bert and Freddie found themselves some distance up the glen, which divided into two parts—one where the stream ran down the centre, and another part where it was dry. Flossie and Nan

had gone back to their mother and father, who sat talking with Mrs. Watson.

"Look, there's a cave!" suddenly exclaimed Freddie, pointing to a dark opening in the rocky side of the gorge.

"So it is!" agreed Bert. "A regular pirate's cave, I'd say! Let's go in!"

Freddie hesitated a moment. The place looked dark and not very inviting.

"Oh, I don't think I want to," Freddie said.

"Well, I'm going in," Bert declared. "I want to see what's there. Nothing can hurt you," he went on. "Even if a pirate was there once he's gone now."

"You go in first, and then maybe I will," Freddie suggested. So Bert disappeared into the blackness. Freddie was just going to ask if everything was all right when Bert suddenly shouted:

"Oh! Oh! I'm falling! Oh, Freddie!"

Then the older boy's voice died away and Freddie was left alone, outside the pirate's cave.

CHAPTER XXI

FLOSSIE'S TARTS

FREDDIE BOBBSEY was a resourceful little lad for his age. It was not the first time he and Bert had gone exploring together, nor the first time something had happened. So now, instead of rushing into the small cave after his brother, as many boys and girls might have done, Freddie turned to hurry back to his father and mother.

"I'll go and get somebody to help you, Bert!" he called. "Maybe if I went in I'd fall too, 'cause it looks dark! I'll get help!"

Bert did not answer, and this made Freddie fear lest something serious had happened. But even then he knew the best thing to do was to bring help as quickly as possible.

Back he hurried to the others, running all the way. Mrs. Bobbsey could tell by the look on her small son's face and by his manner that something unusual had taken place.

"Where's Bert?" she quickly asked, for she remembered that the two boys had gone into the deeper part of Buttermilk Glen together.

"He's in the pirate's cave!" answered Freddie, panting for breath. "He hollered something about

falling down and then he didn't holler any more and I came back to tell you!"

Instantly there was great excitement.

"In the pirate's cave?"

"Is he lost?" Flossie wanted to know.

"You did right to come back so quickly and tell us," Mr. Bobbsey said. "Do you know where this cave is?" he asked Mrs. Watson.

"Yes, I know of a cave," she answered. "It isn't a very large place, nor is it dangerous. I can't understand about Bert's falling. There are no holes in the place that I know of, though I haven't been in it for years."

"Maybe he stumbled over a ledge and fell, striking his head," suggested Mr. Bobbsey, as he jumped up and went to his coat which was hanging on a tree near by. He took some matches from one of the pockets. "I'll make a bark torch to go into the cave and find Bert," he said to his wife. "I didn't bring the electric torch. Can you show me where the cave is, Freddie?"

"I can lead you to the cave," said Mrs. Watson, noticing that Baby Jenny was still peacefully sleeping. "Nan, you and Flossie stay here with her, and your mother and I will go with your father and Freddie to the cave."

Nan and Flossie would have liked to have gone, too, to search for Bert, but they said nothing as they watched the others start.

It did not take them long to reach the place. Mrs. Watson had often been to the glen on picnics and she knew all its windings and turns. Soon they stood in front of the small cavern which

Bert, in common with other boys, had named "pirate's cave".

"Bert! Bert! Are you all right?" his mother called. But still there was no answer.

"He didn't speak to me, after he hollered about falling," reported Freddie.

"He must be in a faint, after falling and hitting his head," suggested Mr. Bobbsey. "I'll go in with the torch and see."

"I'm coming, too!" insisted Mrs. Bobbsey, while Mrs. Watson said she would stay outside with Freddie.

Bert's father pulled off some dry bark, and, twisting it into a torch, set fire to it. This gave him and his wife light enough to see, though rather dimly, as they entered the small cavern. It was just about high enough to stand upright in, and seemed to be a cave that had been hollowed out by the washing of high water in the glen.

Holding the torch before him, Mr. Bobbsey went inside, followed by his wife. He had taken only a few steps before he suddenly cried:

"Stop! Don't come any farther! There's a hole here, and you may tumble in!"

"Is Bert there?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey. Her husband flashed the torch down and as far ahead of him as he could, and then he said:

"Yes, he's here! And he seems to be all right, too. He's moving. I suppose he was dazed by the blow on his head. Hold the torch, Mary, and I'll lift him out."

This was done, and a little later Bert, in the arms

of his father, was carried out of the cave, his mother following with the torch.

"Is he all right?" asked Mrs. Watson.

Bert, getting down out of his father's arms, answered for himself:

"Sure, I'm all right. What happened, anyhow?"

"You went into the cave, fell, and hit your head so hard that you fainted," his mother told him, while she parted his hair to look for a possible cut or gash.

"Oh, I remember now," Bert said, in a dazed sort of way, putting his hand to his head. "I felt myself falling and I yelled to Freddie so he wouldn't come in and get in the hole. Yes, I hit my head all right."

But it was nothing worse than this, and apart from a little cut on his scalp Bert suffered no injury. A drink of water and some more of the cool fluid on his head soon made him feel all right again.

"It isn't safe to go into a dark cave without a light, unless you know every step of the way," warned Mr. Bobbsey, as they went back to where Nan and Flossie had been left with the baby.

But before that was done Mr. Bobbsey explored the cave. He found that the recent rain had washed out a deep hole near the entrance, and it was this hole into which Bert had unsuspectingly stepped.

"Someone else may do the same thing," Mr. Bobbsey said. "I'll put some tree branches in front of the cave as a warning. Later we'll make a danger sign to fasten up over the entrance."

They found Nan and her sister anxiously waiting and the two girls were relieved to find out that Bert wasn't hurt much.

Baby Jenny had awakened by this time, and as it was nearly noon Mrs. Bobbsey and Mrs. Watson decided to set out the picnic lunch, which was done on a flat stump within sight and sound of Buttermilk Falls.

"Don't eat too much, Bert," his mother warned him, as the good things from the basket were ready.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because after a blow on the head you might be made ill if you ate too heartily."

"Oh, I'm all right," insisted the lad, with a smile, though his head ached somewhat. "I didn't know what happened. I felt myself going down and I yelled, and then I seemed to go to sleep."

The remainder of the day was passed pleasantly in the woods. Later the other children were allowed to peer into the cave while their father held a torch that illuminated it.

"I wouldn't want to be a pirate and live there," said Nan, with a shrug of her shoulders as she turned away.

"Pirates don't mind the dark—they like it," said Freddie, as if he knew all about it.

The next day was a busy one, for many peaches had to be sorted to be taken to the auction market. The children rode to Hitchville again, for they liked the busy excitement of the place. It was well that Mr. Watson got a good quantity of his fruit over to Hitchville, for the following day it rained, when it would not have been wise to transport the peaches.

The rainstorm was a hard one and, for midsummer, the day was raw and cold. As the Bobbsey twins

could not go out, they managed to have fun in one of the barns. Sam Porter, who had gone fishing with Bert the day the bees swarmed, came over and taught the children some new games.

He and Bert decided to give a "circus act", as they called it. They made trapezes of bits of harness and some old broom-handles and swung by their legs and arms.

"Watch me do the giant's turn!" cried Bert, as he took an especially long swing on the trapeze. But one of the straps broke, the end of the trapeze bar slipped down, and Bert had a fall.

"Oh!" cried the other children as they saw the boy drop.

But Bert came to no harm, for the trapezes were over big, deep piles of hay, and he fell on one of these piles. Mr. Bobbsey, when he learned what sort of a game the boys were playing, had insisted that the hay be piled under the trapezes, for he was afraid lest they break.

"It's lucky that hay was there," Bert said. "I know now why they put nets under the high trapezes in the circus."

In the afternoon it had not cleared, and Nan, getting tired of playing in the barn, went back to the house. She heard Mrs. Watson saying to Mrs. Bobbsey:

"If I wasn't so busy I'd make some peach tarts. There are plenty of soft peaches that ought to be used."

"Oh, could I make the tarts?" begged Nan. "I know how to make buns and I think I could make tarts."

"I'll show you how," offered her mother, after Mrs. Watson had said Nan might use the kitchen.

"And I want to make some, too," put in Flossie.

"No, dear, you are too little," Nan replied. "But you can watch me and, when you get a little older, you will know how."

"But I want to make some myself," insisted Flossie. However, they would not let her, so she had to be content to sit in a chair near the kitchen table and watch while Nan's mother showed her how to mix the dough and roll out the crust, cutting it into little circles which, when filled with cut-up peaches and baked, would be tarts.

But when Nan had a batch of the tarts ready to go into the oven, she left the kitchen a minute, and this was just the chance Flossie had been waiting for.

"I know how to make peach tarts," said the little girl to herself. "I'll show 'em I can make tarts just as good as Nan."

All the things Nan had used were on the table, flour, water, mixing-bowls, and the like. Flossie sifted some flour into a brown bowl, poured in some water, added a little salt and lard, and then began to stir the mixture.

But she found that the table was too high for her to reach in comfort, even while standing on a chair.

"I'll set the bowl on the floor," decided Flossie. "Then I can stir my tarts and then I'll cut them out, like Nan did, and put in the peaches and bake 'em."

She lifted the bowl off the table and was climbing

down out of the chair when suddenly she slipped. Just as Nan opened the door to come back and clean up, she saw Flossie fall to the floor with the bowl of dough.

Crash! What a sound it was!

"Oh!" cried Nan.

"Oh!" gasped Flossie.

And then you should have seen her!

CHAPTER XXII

HOME AGAIN

POOR Flossie Bobbsey seemed to be covered from head to foot with the dough she had mixed to make peach tarts as she had seen Nan doing. Of course there may have been a few spots on the little girl that were not covered with the mixture of flour and water, but there were not many. Flossie had made her dough "very sloppy", as Bert said, and it splattered all about. There was much on the floor, some on the chair, but most of it was on Flossie.

"Oh, you poor child! What in the world were you trying to do?" cried Nan, as she ran across the room to pick up her little sister.

"I was—now—I was makin' tarts!" sobbed Flossie. "Did I break Mrs. Watson's mixing-bowl, Nan?" For her eyes were so filled with flour that she could not see out of them now.

"No, the bowl isn't broken," answered Nan kindly. "And I'll help you clean up, Flossie. Oh, but it is a terrible mess!" she sighed.

Mrs. Bobbsey and Mrs. Watson, hearing the crash of Flossie's fall, had to run to the kitchen. They could tell at once what had happened, but Flossie thought it best to explain.

"I was making peach tarts," she said. "But I didn't finish."

"Never mind," soothed her mother, for Flossie had been punished enough, Mrs. Bobbsey thought. "You may have some of Nan's tarts."

And when Flossie had been washed and a clean dress put on her, she was given one of the first of the tarts from the oven. For Nan's baking turned out wonderfully well.

"You're getting to be quite a cook," complimented Mr. Watson at the table a little later, when Nan's tarts were served.

"You can put the story of Flossie and her tarts in your composition, Nan," suggested Bert.

"Yes, I think I will," was his sister's answer. "I hope some more things happen around here before we go home," Nan went on. "The more things I have in my composition the better it will be, and maybe I can win the prize."

"I'd give someone a good prize if he or she could find my lost glasses," sighed Mrs. Martin. She was still without her spectacles, though she gave up a large part of each day to looking for them.

"I think you'll have to wait until your eye specialist gets back, and then get him to write you a prescription for a new pair," suggested Mr. Watson, as he got on the floor to "play horse" with Baby Jenny.

"I think someone must have taken them, either by mistake or on purpose," said the old lady. "I remember perfectly well that I had them the day the cattle ran away. Then I laid them down and someone must have come in and picked them up."

"Who would do such a thing as that?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Well, some of those cattlemen might," Mrs. Martin answered. "Those were rough fellows and they might have taken a fancy to my glasses. The frames were of solid gold."

"But all the men who drove the cattle were young fellows," said Mr. Watson. "None of them wore glasses."

"Well, I don't know," sighed Mrs. Watson's cousin. "I wish I had my glasses, that's all I can say."

The happy days at Clover Bank were drawing to a close. Mr. Bobbsey planned to take his family back home in about a week, so the children could return to school.

"But first I must get some more things to put in my composition," Nan said. "Are you going to work on yours, Bert?" she asked her brother, as she saw him wandering about the house as if searching for something. "Are you looking for a pencil and paper?"

"I'm looking for my rod," he said. "I'm going fishing with Sam. I have lots of time to write a composition after I get back to Lakeport."

"Oh, yes," agreed Nan. "I'm going to write my composition after I get home, but I want some things to happen here so I'll have plenty of incidents, as Miss Skell calls them."

In the days that followed the Bobbsey twins had much fun. They went on picnics to the woods and to Buttermilk Glen, but Bert kept away from the pirate's cave.

The children played in the barns, they helped feed

the chickens and gathered the eggs. Old Speck came off her nest beneath the barn with a brood of ten little chickens and was put in a coop near the house. Flossie and Freddie devoted themselves to this little family, feeding them and giving them water every day.

When another crop of hay was gathered, the twins were allowed to ride on top of the loads as they were brought in from the field, though Nan did not again try to operate the hayfork. Twice Bert and Sam went fishing, and once they took Freddie, who, to his great delight, caught a good-sized chub. But it dropped off the hook when close to the bank and flapped its way back towards the creek.

"I'll get you! I'll get you!" shouted the little fellow, and he threw himself on the fish so vigorously that he slipped and went into the water himself. But Bert and Sam soon pulled him out.

The late crop of peaches was being picked when it was time for the Bobbsey family to return home. Mr. Bobbsey had gone to Lakeport to attend to some business, but was coming back to drive his family home in the car.

"Only one day more," sighed Nan, one afternoon, when word came in a letter that Mr. Bobbsey would arrive the following morning and that the twins must be ready to leave. "Oh, it's so wonderful here I could stay for ever!"

"So could I," Bert said. "But at the same time I'll be glad to get back home and see the fellows. We're going to have a football eleven this season, and maybe I'll be captain."

"And I suppose I'll be glad to get home after I

arrive," said Nan. "Anyhow, I want to see if I can win the composition prize. And that reminds me, I want to gather some yellow flowers I saw the other day and didn't know what they were. Miss Skell said we should put in something about the trees and the flowers we saw."

So Nan, taking Flossie and Freddie with her, went to gather the flowers, so she could find out their name, while Bert went on a last fishing trip with Sam.

Bert came back from his trip with a fine catch of fish which were cooked for the evening meal. Mr. Watson said he would miss this treat, as he was so busy he seldom had time to go to the creek with hook and line.

Early the next morning all was in readiness for the trip back to Lakeport. The Bobbsey twins, brown as berries from their life out of doors, once again put on their "good clothes", suitcases were packed, and the car was brought to the door.

"Have you got room for these?" asked Mr. Watson, pointing to three baskets of choice peaches on the porch. "I sorted these out especially for you. They'll stand the journey if you don't bounce them too much over the rough roads, and when you get them home, Nan, you can make some more tarts."

"Indeed we'll make room for the peaches!" said Mr. Bobbsey. "And very glad we are to have them."

"If we could take some bees home, we could have some honey, too," remarked Freddie.

They all laughed at this, and the farmer said:

"I'm afraid it would be dangerous to carry bees. But in the autumn I'll send you some honey."

"Well, good-bye, folks!" called Zeek. "I've got to go back to the peach orchard. We're getting in the last load now and I don't want anything to happen to it."

The children and their parents said farewell to the kind hired man, and Mrs. Martin called after him:

"If you find my lost glasses anywhere, Zeek, bring them back with you."

"I will," he promised, though of course as she had lost them around the house, he would hardly find them in the orchard.

"Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye!" was called over and over again, Baby Jenny waving her little hand to the travellers. Then, with a jolly tooting of the horn, the Bobbseys began their homeward journey.

There was no delay and no such experiences as had befallen them on their trip to Clover Bank, although there was one detour that made, for a short time, a little rough going, and that evening they reached their home in Lakeport. Dinah and Sam were at the house, waiting to greet them.

"How's all mah honey lambs?" asked the fat cook, as she took some of the luggage Mrs. Bobbsey handed out.

"We're all well, thank you, Dinah," said Mr. Bobbsey. "Did you and Sam have a good holiday?"

"Jes' fine!" answered Sam.

"But Ah suah did miss de chilluns!" murmured Dinah. "Whut all am dis?" she asked as she saw the baskets in the car.

"Those are some peaches Mr. Watson gave us," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I'm going to make peach tarts," added Nan.

"I think those peaches had better be sorted," observed Mr. Bobbsey. "We went over a bit of rough road in making that detour, and some fruit may be bruised."

"That's right," agreed his wife. "And as Mr. Watson told us, a few bruised peaches in a basket may spoil the whole lot. We'll turn them out on the table and sort them." This work was begun as soon as the Bobbseys had rested a little while.

As the last peaches from one of the baskets rolled out on the table, Nan, looking in the bottom of the container, uttered a cry, darted out her hand, and said:

"Look! I've found Mrs. Martin's glasses!"

"Mrs. Martin's glasses!" exclaimed her mother. "Where were they?"

"In the bottom of that basket, covered with the peaches," said Nan. "Look!" She held out the spectacle-case which, when it was opened, proved to contain the old lady's glasses, not in the least harmed.

"How did they get there?" asked Bert.

No one knew, of course, but it was thought that the empty peach-basket must have been on the porch at the time of the cattle scare. Mrs. Martin must either have dropped or, in her excitement, have put the glasses in the basket. Later it was put out in the shed, no one looking to see if it contained anything. The glasses must have remained in the basket all the while, and even when the peaches were put in to be

given to Mr. Bobbsey, no one saw the spectacle-case. The case was about the colour of the basket and, of course, a spectacle-case is not large.

"But here they are, safe, and how glad Mrs. Martin will be," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "I'll post them right back to her."

This was done, and a grateful letter of thanks came in reply a few days later.

"Baby Jenny misses the children," Mrs. Watson had added in a postscript to her cousin's letter.

"And we miss her," said Nan. "But I've got something more to put in my composition—I'm going to write about the lost glasses and how they were found in the peaches."

School opened about a week later, and after the first few lessons Miss Skell brought up the subject of the holiday compositions. She gave the children three days in which to write and hand in their essays, and Nan worked hard. Bert also wrote one, but he spent so little time over it that his mother said he would not stand much chance of winning the prize.

At last the day came when the decision was to be made. There were some anxious hearts among the boys and girls in Miss Skell's class as the teacher faced them ready to tell who had won the prize.

"Most of you did very well," said their teacher. "Much better than I expected. There were some excellent compositions handed in—and some very poor and short ones." As she said this she seemed to look at Bert Bobbsey. "But the best of all was Nan Bobbsey's," went on Miss Skell. "So I award her

the prize, and I am going to ask her to come up here and read her composition to you. I think you will all enjoy it. The name of it is: 'A Holiday in the Country'. Come, Nan."

Nan blushed, but, proud and happy, she read her story, and the boys and girls all said it was most interesting. Nan told in an entertaining way about many of the incidents that had taken place at Clover Bank, and on the way there and back, just as they have been told to you here.

"Now what books do you want for a prize?" asked Miss Skell, when Nan had finished.

"A set of nice story-books for girls, if you please," was the answer.

And that is what Nan received a little later. She still has those books, and thinks them the best in her little library.

"Well, we certainly had fun at Clover Bank," said Bert to his brother and sisters that afternoon on their way home from school, Nan hurrying to tell the good news about winning the prize.

"Lots of fun," she agreed.

"Wasn't it funny when Freddie and I saw the bear that turned into a calf?" laughed Flossie.

"And wasn't it fun that day when we played outdoors in the rain?" asked Freddie. "I wonder if we'll ever have fun like that again?"

Of course the children could not guess that they were to be very merry and laugh many times on their next holiday. It is told about in *The Bobbsey Twins at Cherry Corners*.

"I'm going to play outdoors even when I'm big," said Flossie. "I just love it."

"When I grow up, I'm going to be a farmer," announced Freddie.

"Not a fireman?" Bert teased his brother.

"Well, maybe I can be a fireman in the wintertime," decided the little boy.



Read more of the Twins' adventures in
"THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT CHERRY CORNERS"